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J. R. Howe

A Daughter of the Medicis

MARGUERITE DE VALOIS, QUEEN OF FRANCE AND NAVARRE (ætat 20)

("Queen Margot")

From an Engraving after a Drawing by an Unknown Artist, in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

A DAUGHTER OF THE MEDICIS

The Romantic Story of

MARGARET OF VALOIS

By Professor Jean H. Mariéjol

Translated from the French by

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DAUGHTER OF THE MEDICIS

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INTRODUCTION

MARGARET OF VALOIS, Queen of Navarre and France, was the daughter of Henry II of France and Catherine de' Medici. Her twofold inheritance from Francis I and Lorenzo the Magnificent, the brilliant Court of France where she spent her youth, and finally her century, the glowing sixteenth century of the High Renaissance, all helped to mould her personality and make her one of the most distinguished members of the Valois-Medici family.

She was born in the full flush of French power. Her father had secured the natural frontier of the Rhine, seizing the bishoprics of Metz, Toul, and Verdun, and dealing the first blow to the ageing Emperor, Charles V. But these triumphs in foreign countries were to some extent only the reflection of the consolidation in France. Henry II had concentrated all legislative power in his own Council; he himself became the supreme legal, financial, and diplomatic authority in the realm. Only the Kingdom of Navarre, lying far to the south, retained its old privileges of vassal state under Anthony of Bourbon. The policy of the House of Valois was to strengthen the smaller nobles at the expense of the princes of the blood; the King looked to the future, confident of his powers and the establishment of absolute monarchy.

His reign marked the culmination of the revival of learning, fostered by Francis I in the Collège de France. Joachim du Bellay, Ronsard, and the lesser stars that made up the Pleiad sang the praises of this King, gallant in love, triumphant in war. Catherine de' Medici had her own distinctions, too—

pride of race, education beyond her time, and the finest distillation of Florentine culture. No Court in Christendom could compare with that of France at this period for brilliance, amusement, or sheer enjoyment of living. Royal castles were no longer fortresses; Amboise, Blois, Chambord, Chenonceaux, Azay-le-Rideau were the order of a day where the amenities of life were of paramount importance.

The Reformation, the new passion for religious truth, was sweeping slowly over France, drawing adherents from all ranks of society, but as yet it had not become a major issue. The middle years of the sixteenth century were an interlude of gracious calm when the intellectual elements of the Renaissance came to flower and the sinister forces were held in abeyance. Margaret of Valois was ushered into the world under the happiest auspices, endowed with the rich heritage of her forebears, the quintessence of all that the Renaissance could offer. The stage was set for the drama of a life where bloodshed would mingle with poetry, where passion and cold science would unaccountably join hands, where no paradox would be too incredible and no fortune too extreme. Princess of France, queen twice over, benefactor of the arts, mistress of countless lovers, adored and vituperated, *"la reine Margot"* expresses in her tempestuous life the action and violence of her age.

A Daughter of the Medicis

CHAPTER ONE

GIRLHOOD AND BETROTHAL

SHE was born at the palace of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, one of the favourite country residences of the Valois, on the fourteenth day of May, 1553, when the whole French court was rejoicing over the news of Spanish reverses in Italy and the defeat of Charles V before Metz. At her christening she received for godmother Marguerite of France, the learned sister of Henry II, and for godfather, Alphonse d'Este, prince of Ferrara and patron of Tasso. So at its very beginning were proclaimed the two redeeming influences of her storm-tossed, passionate life, the intimacy with affairs of state and the love for letters.

Very little is known of her childhood. She was kept at Amboise, to be brought up by nurses, with occasional hurried visits from her busy mother. Of her early years she records nothing except two trifling stories, one about the Prince of Joinville, the eldest son of Duke Francis of Guise; the other about her brother, Henry of Anjou, who became Henry III. In both cases she has a purpose in taxing her memory, for these two men, in one way or another, were the cause of most of her misfortunes. She readily forgets attending the coronation of Francis II, the opening of the Estates-General at Orléans in 1560, and the Conference of Poissy. But she wishes to make it quite clear, as if to refute the common report which made him the lover of her youth, that she foresaw from the first the true characteristics of Joinville, unruly head of the Catholic League.

It was, she says, "little before" the tournament where her father, Henry II, was mortally wounded. She was about six years old, and, sitting on her father's knee, she was watching Joinville playing with Henry Bourbon, Marquis of Beaupréau, the son of the Prince of La Roche-sur-Yon. The King asked her which of the two she would choose for her "faithful knight." "I told him that I would have the marquis. He said to me, 'Why? He is not so comely.' For, indeed, Joinville was fair, and the Marquis of Beaupréau dark and swarthy, but I replied to him, 'Because he is good, and the other can only be happy doing a mischief to some one and would always be the master.' A prophecy amply fulfilled, as we saw thereafter." [1]

Her second story, too, is all to her credit.

It was after the death of Francis II and the fall of the Dukes of Guise, implacable persecutors of heretics. Catherine de' Medici, regent for Charles IX, had put a stop to the outrages, released the prisoners, and granted to the Protestants freedom of conscience if not freedom of worship. There was, of course, deliberate policy in this act of tolerance. A foreigner, without party or prestige at the beginning of her regency, the Queen Mother sought a counter-support to the power of the Guise faction and the militant Catholics. The dissenters, the moderate Catholics, and the adherents of the princes of the blood stood ready to her hand. But the victims of the day before were hardly content with compromises; they wanted the right to practice their religion openly. Their power was growing. The King of Navarre, Anthony of Bourbon, his queen, Jeanne d'Albret, Admiral Coligny, and the Montmorency clan, great ladies like the Princess of Condé, the Duchess of Montpensier, and the Duchess of Uzès—all

[1] *Mémoirs*, edition Guessard, p. 5.

professed or favoured the new beliefs. There were prayer-meetings even in the household of the King himself. But Catherine was complacent, proud of a policy that could keep the kingdom at peace. The spreading disturbances, the mounting passions, the quarrels carried to the sword's point between Protestants and Catholics, could not shake her hopeful calm. She was only annoyed that the pope, Pius IV, and Philip II of Spain, her son-in-law, could accuse her of imprudence or suspect her of conniving at heresy. She hit upon the idea of calling a general council of the Geneva doctors and the heads of the Gallic Church in the hope that the theologians might draw up some ambiguously worded formula that would be acceptable to everyone. But she forgot to reckon with the devout believers, to whom the least point is vital, since the issue is everlasting salvation.

After the first two sessions of the Conference of Poissy, attended by the entire royal family, the public debates had to be closed, so high ran the popular feeling. The attempted union served only to emphasize the disagreements, while the official recognition of the new religion, implicit in the Conference, encouraged the Protestants, and alarmed the Catholics proportionately. The Court was divided. The Constable Montmorency joined his old enemy, Guise, and Marshal St.-André to defend the orthodox faith. Rumour had it that the Duke of Nemours, who was in love with the Duke of Guise's wife, was planning to kidnap Henry of Anjou and set him up as a Catholic pretender to the throne. Catherine, through fear and anger, supported the Protestants more vigorously than ever. Their doctrines spread even into the royal family. Charles IX with a miter on his head burlesqued the ceremonial of the Church, and Henry of Anjou developed violent iconoclastic zeal.

Margaret alone, in this court "infected with heresy," remained true to her faith in spite of the persistent efforts of her brother, the Duke of Anjou. Time and again he threw her *Book of Hours* into the fire, and gave her Huguenot psalms and prayers in their place. But she ran for consolation to the Cardinal de Tournon, that good old man, who "strengthened her to suffer all things for her religion" and "replaced the *Hours* and rosaries." "My brother of Anjou," she says, "and those other dear souls who wanted to ruin mine, abused me, saying that I was childish and stupid, that it was evident I had no intelligence, and that any clever person, no matter what age or sex, would abandon the ways of bigotry. And my brother of Anjou, adding threats, said that the Queen, my mother, would have me whipped. I replied, while dissolving in tears, for at the age of seven or eight one is rather easily frightened, that he could have me whipped and have me killed if he wanted, that I would endure anything they might do to me rather than lose my immortal soul."

This recital of a childish quarrel is intended to show not only her own faithful character, but to cast discredit on her brother. Her *Mémoires,* written thirty-seven years after the incident, are biased. She has a habit of sketching only the details favorable to herself, and her sins of tactful omission are numerous. Here she has no word for the antics of Charles IX, whom she loved, and vents her whole displeasure on Henry of Anjou.

Some time after the conclusion of the first civil war Margaret was allowed to leave Amboise and rejoin her mother at Fontainebleau. Catherine established a court as large and as fine as that before the disturbances. She called to it eighty ladies-in-waiting from among the noblest houses of the realm, and required that they be dressed in silk and gold like goddesses, but that they be friendly like simple mortals. "I have

heard it said to the King, your grandfather [Francis I]," she wrote to one of her sons, "that two things are needed to live in peace with the French and assure their love for the King—keep them happy and busied in some entertainment." Amusements were part of her plan of government; she gave several superb spectacles in February and March of 1564 to distract the minds of her Protestant and Catholic gentlemen from the thought of war, her dreaded civil war.

Margaret does not seem to remember these festivities, although she was three years older. Perhaps her having only a very slight part in the great performance of "Belle Genièvre" where her brothers, Condé, and the noblest lords and ladies in the land trod the boards, may have had something to do with the lapse of memory.

There followed a royal progression which lasted for two years, from March, 1564, to May, 1566. From one end of the kingdom to another went the young King, with the members of his Council, his guard of honour, and a brilliant company of ladies and gentlemen, to display his splendour and power and to rekindle in people's hearts a proper allegiance to the crown. Margaret declares that the "details" of this tour of France faded from her mind like a dream, and she leaves it to those of riper years to describe "the celebrations that took place everywhere, at Bar-le-Duc for the baptism of the hereditary prince of Lorraine, at Lyons with Monsieur and Madame de Savoye, and at Bayonne where the Queen of Spain, her sister, came to meet the French Court."

The one event at Bayonne that left a lasting memory was a day's journey down the river Adour, and the festival that Catherine gave the two courts on the island of Aiguemeau on the 25th of June, 1565. Nature provided the setting, "having hollowed out in the middle of the island a great oval meadow,

prettily wooded, where the Queen my mother had disposed many round tables for twelve persons, and at one end, on a high dais, the royal table." Along the way, river gods sang as they accompanied Their Majesties' barque. When they landed, two rows of shepherdesses, dressed in the costumes of all the French provinces, made of cloth of gold and satin, danced in the fashion of their own countries. The feast, the sudden apparition of "a great illuminated rock bearing nymphs," the ballet which followed, interrupted by a storm, the return voyage in wind and rain, these were the main excitements of the day. Natural enough that they should make an impression on a little girl, but there were other matters in hand that concerned her more closely.

It was not solely for the pleasure of greeting her daughter, Elizabeth of Valois, that Catherine had arranged the meeting with the court of Spain. From the beginning of her regency she had been thinking of the marriage of Margaret, not yet eight years old, with Don Carlos, the heir of Philip II, who was fifteen. She sent portraits of her entire family to Spain. The queen wrote back to her mother, "When the pictures came, the princess [Philip's sister] was here and she thought them the most lovely in the world, above all that of my little sister. Don Carlos came later, and he said to me three or four times, smiling, *'Mas hermosa es la pequeña!'* [The most beautiful is the little one.]" [1]

Philip II parried these matrimonial advances with suave compliments. He was anxious to marry Don Carlos to Mary Stuart, niece of the Dukes of Guise, widow of Francis II, and Queen of Scotland. This alliance would give him a means of bringing pressure on the Queen of England, Elizabeth, who

[1] Louis Paris, *Négociations sous François II*, p. 806.

had declared against Catholicism, and would provide ports of call between Spain and the Netherlands.

After a long delay, marked by the disastrous Conference of Poissy and the violent Catholic reaction of the first civil war, Catherine renewed the question of marriages. In 1563, she broke off negotiations for the marriage of Charles IX with an Austrian archduchess, and of Margaret with Archduke Rudolph, son of the Emperor Maximilian. She preferred the idea of a match with the heir to all the estates of Spain, and she dreamed of marrying her favourite son, Henry of Anjou, to the Dowager Queen of Portugal. The lady might well have been the boy's mother, but she calculated that the King of Spain would have to give a royal dowry to make up for the difference in age, and it might even be the Principality of the Netherlands.

To all these proposals of maternal ambition Philip countered by complaining of her policy of religious tolerance, whose ill effects he claimed were being felt even in the Spanish Netherlands. He wanted Catherine to attack the evil at its root, but she was unwilling to provoke the risk of civil war without some definitely promised advantages. If Philip would consent to the marriages, she would consider the religious situation. Her son-in-law doubted her sincerity. He refused to come to Bayonne for fear of alarming the Queen of England by a Franco-Spanish alliance. He sent the Duke of Alba with Elizabeth of Valois, with instructions to propose united action against heresy, banishment of all Protestant ministers, and suppression of freedom of conscience, and he offered nothing in return.

The meeting planned to tighten the bonds between the two dynasties came very near ending in an open break. To avoid it, Catherine promised "to bring some remedy" to the religious

question, once the royal progress was finished. Philip had to be content with this indefinite agreement. A further coolness was brought about by the massacre of some French colonists on Spanish territory in Florida. Catherine pursued her leisurely way through France, and at Moulins succeeded in reconciling the Dukes of Guise and Admiral Coligny.

Margaret passes rapidly in her *Mémoires* from the celebrations at Bayonne to the resumption of the civil wars, justly blaming the Protestant party. The Huguenot chiefs were convinced that the two courts had planned the ruin of the Reformed Church, and held as evidence Catherine's attitude to the outbreaks in the Netherlands. The people there, aroused by the persecutions, rose in a body, attacked the churches, overthrew the altars, and mutilated the sacred images. Philip at once sent the Duke of Alba with ten thousand seasoned troops to the scene of action. Catherine raised an army of Swiss and French foot-soldiers and stationed them in Picardy. But instead of attacking the Spanish forces, as the Huguenots had hoped, she supplied them with provisions and preserved a benevolent neutrality. The Protestants decided that she must be in league with Philip to wipe out the "heretics" in France as well as in the Netherlands. To defeat her ends, they plotted to capture her and the King in the castle of Monceaux, and transfer to their side by force the royal authority. The scheme came to nothing, but Catherine would not forget "this infamous project" which threatened the security of the realm.[1]

She finally decided once and for all to have done with a faction that had repaid her tolerance by open revolt. But after the indecisive battle of Saint-Denis, where the old Constable Montmorency was mortally wounded, she was forced, for lack

[1] *Lettres*, p. 61.

of money, to sign a peace of sorts (Longjumeau, March 23, 1568). She still cherished the idea of revenge. She planned, perhaps, seizing Condé and Coligny, and using the violent methods of the Duke of Alba in Belgium. They escaped, however, and hostilities began again. She now sought Spanish support against the Huguenots, and renewed the marriage proposals, feeling that, since the die was cast, there could no longer be any opposition.

Meanwhile, Margaret's education was about finished. For the last three years, from the end of the royal progress to the third civil war, it had been very haphazard. The sudden appearance of enemy troops, flights into fortified castles and constant journeys, broke up the course of her studies. One should not compare this interrupted schooling with that given Mary Stuart and the Queen of Spain during the peaceful reign of Henry II. Margaret herself says that she acquired her real taste for reading when she was kept in retirement in the Louvre in 1573.

Her tutor was probably Henry Le Mignon, once a professor at the College of Sens. After her marriage to the King of Navarre she chose him for her almoner, and this honorary title would seem to be the reward for his services. One is forced to guess the subjects he taught his royal pupil. It was certainly not calligraphy, to judge by her clumsy, sprawling signature. Nor yet spelling, a branch of knowledge cultivated only by printers. Like most sixteenth-century ladies, Margaret wrote as her fancy dictated from vague impressions of eye and ear, without the phonetic sense her mother inherited from her Italian upbringing. She blandly ignored accents and punctuation, and made very little use of capital letters. Le Mignon undoubtedly taught her Latin, but it is unlikely that she knew Greek, for her library shows that she read

Plato, Homer, and St. John Chrysostom only in translation. She understood and spoke Italian and Spanish "as if she had been born and brought up in those lands," [1] having probably learned those languages as a child from her governesses.

One can be very sure that Catherine insisted on the graceful arts in her daughter's education. She herself was very fond of good music, and her children inherited her taste. Margaret sang, and accompanied herself on the lute. She danced beautifully, as Ronsard exclaims in verse:

> To the music's fall and rise
> Glides her foot in stately tread,
> Art that with Terpsichore's vies
> Grace o'er mortal beauty shed.[2]

Brantôme speaks of her grace and dignity in dancing the Spanish Pavane with the Duke of Anjou: "The steps were so daintily performed, and the pauses made in such fine style, that one knew not which to admire most, the gaiety of the movement or the haughtiness of the withdrawal." [3]

She may have had as teachers the famous soprano, Etienne Le Roy and the Court ballet-master, Paul de Rege.

Her mother, who embroidered marvellously, and spent her time after dinner, as Brantôme says, "with works of silks, whereat she was perfection itself," [4] must have taught her the arts of Pallas. The young girl had less success with the "divine labors of the Muse," [5] for she left no verses worthy of memory, her mind being, like Catherine's, more inclined towards the sciences. But she won a reputation for being "learned."

The Court itself was an excellent school. Margaret, destined for a royal marriage, lived there in intimate touch with her

[1] Brantôme, vol. vii, p. 75.
[2] Ronsard, vol. ii, p. 190.
[3] Brantôme, vol. viii, p. 73.
[4] *Ibid.*, vol. vii, p. 347.
[5] Ronsard, vol. iv, p. 149.

mother, who combined the culture of two countries and two civilizations. She was thrown with great ladies like the Duchess of Retz, beautiful and scholarly and a poet besides; the Duchess of Uzès, one of the wittiest and most mocking women of the time; the Duchess of Nevers, with the periwinkle eyes; Henrietta of Clèves, who could argue as brilliantly as Jeanne d'Albret herself. It was in the society of these women, clever, cultivated, and all, except the last, "gallant," that Margaret's education was completed.

At sixteen, she says, she cared for nothing but hunting and dancing, having not even the slightest desire to "dress and appear beautiful." It was her brother, the old enemy of childhood, who first introduced her to the world of ambitions and political intrigues.

She had forgiven him his teasing persecutions; she loved him, and it seemed that he was fond of her. Their mutual affection was so apparent that Ronsard makes her speak to her brother in these words in the little pastoral he wrote for the royal children:

> Xandrin, my sweet affection,
> My garden-pink and rose,
> Thou canst take all my flock away
> And of myself dispose.[1]

It seems a little strange that the "odious tyrant" of a few years before should have turned into a complete hero, but the fact remains that Margaret adored him.

Catherine, too, loved Henry of Anjou above all her children for his beauty, intelligence, and exquisite manners. When he was eighteen, she gave him all the powers of the late Constable of France with the title of Lieutenant-General, and put him in command of the military forces operating in the West

[1] Ronsard, vol. v, p. 266.

against the Protestants. After the battle of Jarnac, March 13, 1569, he hoped to wipe out Coligny and the rest of the Huguenots, but before engaging in the decisive battle, he wished to give account to the King of his stewardship. Catherine rushed to meet him, "making in three days and a half the journey from Paris to Tours," accompanied by Charles IX and Margaret. From August 28 to September 3, 1569, was held the great council, where the Duke of Anjou expounded the history of his campaign before Their Majesties and all the military leaders. "Performed with such art and eloquence, delivered with so much grace," says Margaret, "that all marvelled who heard him, all the more as his youth heightened the effect of his words, more suitable to a greybeard and a veteran than to a mere boy of his years." Catherine felt a "tremendous great joy" which she tried not to show lest Charles IX should feel overshadowed by his brother's success. Margaret was completely carried away by enthusiasm. Even thirty years later, when she wrote her *Mémoires* and had good cause to hate this brother, she surrounds his picture at this time with a halo of glory.

Great was her delight when he asked her to help him. He was afraid of his brother's jealousy and possible influence on the Queen Mother; he wanted some one at Court who would faithfully defend his interests. "I know no one," he said to Margaret, "as suitable as you, whom I consider my second self. You have all the qualities to be desired, wit, good judgment and a loyal heart." [1] Never had she heard such praise. She was only sixteen, and this wonderful brother was actually appealing to her devotion and intelligence. To express the emotion she felt, she borrows a phrase of Moses, "Who am

[1] Guessard, p. 114.

I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?"[1] But later she felt "powers" within her, awakened by the magic of his words.

To speak as she does of her abilities, of the courage which never failed her, of the confidence which came to her, shows that she felt herself destined to play a great rôle. Her daily intimacy with the Queen Mother seemed but the first step of preparation for an exalted position. Nor was her ambition fantastic in an age where so many women were distinguished by the qualities of statesmen. Elizabeth of England and Catherine were ruling kingdoms; Margaret of Austria had but recently ceased to govern the Netherlands. Why should not she share the fortunes of her brother?

Welcomed as confidante by Catherine, who bade her speak freely, "I spoke to her always of my brother," she says, "and told her all that befell him with such fidelity that I lived and breathed to do his will." From the way in which she speaks of her efforts, one would not believe that the service was so short, barely two months. In November the Court joined the Duke of Anjou before Saint-Jean d'Angély, which he was besieging after the victory of Moncontour.

Margaret expected some thanks, but "invidious fortune" allowed her "as much of grief" as she had hoped to find of joy. To the praises of Catherine, who told of her interest and faithfulness, the Duke of Anjou replied coldly that it was not wise to continue such confidence in Margaret. She was growing beautiful, the Duke of Guise wanted to court her and have his uncles arrange the marriage. If she began to love him, one would have to fear her indiscretions. His mother must know the overweening ambition of these younger sons of Lorraine, and how they had "ever crossed" the royal house. It was safer that she should "speak no more of state matters"

[1] Exodus 3:11.

to her daughter, and that she should gradually draw away from "intimacy" with her.

And Catherine followed his advice, having a blind faith in her son's judgment. Margaret, surprised enough at the change, was even more upset by the explanation she extracted with difficulty from the Queen. It was pure slander, she protested; she had never given a thought to the Duke of Guise nor had she ever heard him express any such intentions. But she could not convince her mother of her "innocence," and, furious at seeing "no room for reason or truth" in that prejudiced mind, she swore to remember to her dying day the wrong her brother had done her.

This disillusionment, "weighing on her heart and possessing all her soul," made her more subject to the infection of "the pernicious air which was then in the army." She fell ill of a "continuous and hectic fever" and nearly died.

It cannot really be proved that the accusation was only "an invention," as Margaret declared. Henry of Guise was eighteen years old in 1569. He had fulfilled the promise of his childhood; he was fair, handsome, and brave. At sixteen, he had gone to fight the Turks in Hungary, and on his return to France had triumphantly defended the town of Poitiers against Coligny. At Moncontour he was wounded "in a painful spot, on his ankle bone." [1] He was, of course, only a younger son of the House of Lorraine, but he was head of the branch most distinguished in renown, military genius, and successful service in the Catholic cause. His mother, the Dowager Duchess, second wife of the Duke of Nemours, was the granddaughter of Louis XII. He had an income of 200,000 crowns. Was he not a suitable match for Margaret

[1] *Lettres*, vol. iii, p. 279.

of Valois, whose sister Claude had married the Duke of Lorraine, Charles III?

But Catherine wanted a royal crown for her youngest daughter. After Don Carlos and the Archduke Rudolph, one a half-wit, the other a hypochondriac, had vanished from the matrimonial horizon, she hoped to marry her to her son-in-law, whose wife, Elizabeth of Valois, had just died. Repulsed again, she fell back on the King of Portugal and charged her ambassador at Madrid with opening negotiations. This young monarch "resembled greatly," as Fourquevaulx wrote Catherine, "in disposition his cousin, the late Prince of Spain, being, like him, headstrong, eccentric, changeable and terribly obstinate in his opinions." [1] He had been brought up by monks to fear women, and it was not known whether he was "of use to have children." [2] The doctors, with one accord, believed he could not live long.

This union which Catherine so wished, in spite of the shortcomings of the bridegroom, displeased both the King of Spain and the Dowager Queen of Portugal—the one because he did not want a French queen at Lisbon, the other because she hoped to marry her son to an Austrian archduchess. The French Court had to bear a further mortification. Philip II took for his bride the elder of the archduchesses, betrothed to Charles IX, and left him her younger sister, as if to establish his precedence as a son of Charles V. After this high-handed procedure, he seemed more inclined to favour Catherine's proposals, and even gave his consent.[3]

Affairs in France, too, forced Philip to be more agreeable. While the royal forces were wearing themselves out before Saint-Jean d'Angély, which had resisted siege for over two

[1] Fourquevaulx, vol. ii, p. 153.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 198.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 88.

months, Coligny escaped to the south with the survivors of Moncontour. He wintered in the fertile region of Montauban, and reorganized his army. In the spring he made a forced march across Languedoc and reached the valley of the Rhone, which he began to ascend. The Catholic powers could well fear that Catherine, exhausted by the struggles and at the end of her resources, might sign a peace. The hope of the Portuguese marriage was the best bait to hold out to her. The King of Spain promised to bring the affair to a happy ending; the Portuguese minister at Paris announced the arrival of a special messenger; even the Pope, Pius V, urged the alliance.

The French Court felt confident of success, and Catherine resolved to have done with the supposed "love-idyll" of her daughter. Margaret tells the story in her own way, which was to omit and rearrange the facts. The Portuguese envoys having come to Paris to ask her hand, her mother bade her prepare to receive them and took her to task bitterly for having listened to any proposals from the House of Lorraine. Margaret protested again her innocence and obedience, but without clearing herself of the insinuations of the Duke of Anjou. Finally, to stop all chatter, she wrote to her sister Claude, Duchess of Lorraine, asking her to make Guise leave the Court and wed the Princess of Porcien, a young widow whom he had been courting in real affection. This betrothal, she says, "shut the mouths of all her enemies" and gave her "some peace." She adds, "the King of Spain, however, not wishing that his kinsfolk should marry out of his family, broke off the whole arrangement with the King of Portugal, and spoke no more of it." She excels in these summaries that tell only part of the truth. Both these statements need a little amplifying.

According to Don Francis de Alava, Spanish ambassador to France, there was considerably more to the affair. Catherine had intercepted a correspondence between Margaret and the Duke of Guise. A lady-in-waiting had acted as intermediary, exchanging the lovers' notes and letters. Charles IX, outraged when he heard that a daughter of France was giving herself without his consent, came into his mother's room in his night-shirt at five o'clock in the morning, demanding to see Margaret. She was summoned, and arrived about half an hour later. He set the Comte de Retz to guard the door, and then he and Catherine fell on Margaret and beat her severely. Her clothes were so torn and her hair so dishevelled, that the Queen spent an hour smoothing her over, for fear some one would notice her condition.[1]

Later that summer, Catherine, despairing of aid from Philip, without funds, and threatened by Coligny at Châtillon-sur-Loire, on the very outskirts of Paris, granted the Protestants a peace on more favourable terms than the previous edicts. They were to have freedom of conscience throughout the kingdom, freedom of worship in certain specified places, and, as protection against the violence of the masses, four places of sanctuary for the two succeeding years. The agreement was signed at Saint-Germain on the 8th of August, 1570.

It was a complete change of policy, although she still hoped against hope for the Portuguese marriage. Philip, contrary to his word, had not "stormed and threatened" at Lisbon. It was, remarked Fourquevaulx, who still believed in his sincerity, because he was by nature "too indolent, even in affairs that touched him most closely." The Dowager Queen kept up her unshakable opposition. The fanatic monks wanted to keep the young King in his state of innocence. They persuaded

[1] *Letters of Alava,* Archives Nationaux, k. 1514 and 1516.

him to send a gentleman incognito to Paris to inquire into the gossip about the relations of the young girl and the Duke of Guise.[1] The confidential agent could find no proof of impropriety or intimacy.

But the Pope was the only sovereign who now heartily endorsed the match. Philip had changed his mind and quarrelled with Fourquevaulx. After the 12th of December it was generally known in Paris that the King of Portugal, in spite of his official request for betrothal, had practically "repudiated this young girl, who truly," wrote the nuncio Frangipani to the Pope's secretary, "did not deserve such injustice."

Charles IX finally lost patience and notified his ambassador at Madrid (January 8, 1571), to speak no more of the Portuguese marriage unless to declare that His Most Christian Majesty would have none of it, and that his "resolve" was "to marry madame his sister very soon in such quarter that he would receive pleasure, content and devoted service, and that the husband would feel himself greatly honoured by His Majesty." This was the first announcement of the betrothal, which the Catholic powers dreaded, with Henry, Prince of Navarre and leader of the Protestant party.

[1] Hirschaur, p. 68, note 3.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CRIMSON WEDDING

IT WAS a marriage prospect of long standing. Once had Henry II and again had Catherine, during the minority of Charles IX, offered the hand of their youngest daughter to the son of the King of Navarre and Jeanne d'Albret.[1]

Religious difficulties had broken up the plan. Catherine had declared herself against the Protestants, and she thought that the Catholic powers, grateful for her support, would help her establish her son and daughter to advantage. But she realized that she would be left with serving God to no profit, and she did not find that virtue sufficient reward. She laid all the blame for her disappointments at the door of Philip of Spain, who had seconded her in nothing and crossed her at every turn. In spite of him, she would secure a crown for her daughter. The only suitable match, barring the Catholics, was the Prince of Navarre. A system of Protestant alliances would be her revenge.

But there remained the stumbling-block of Jeanne d'Albret. The Queen of Navarre, converted to the Reformed Church and devoted to its cause, had put forth for the service of her religious allies her soldiers and all the resources of her heart and energy. Without fear of censure, she abolished freedom of Catholic worship in the states of Béarn and Navarre where she was independent sovereign, and, as subject of the King of France, claimed the same freedom for the Protestants in

[1] Rochambeau, p. 145. *Lettres de Catherine*, vol. x, p. 540.

the whole kingdom. She loathed the Dukes of Guise, whom she believed capable of any crime, and she accused Catherine of being their dupe or accomplice. It was this violent, suspicious, and fanatic Huguenot that the Queen Mother, to punish the King of Spain and to make her daughter a queen, undertook to win over, after eight years of fighting and massacre, to the idea of a family alliance.

Even after the peace of Saint-Germain, the Huguenot leaders remained on the defensive. They gathered at La Rochelle, as if they still feared some attack on their lives and liberty. Catherine sent the Marshal de Cossé-Brissac, a moderate Catholic, to assure the Queen of Navarre of the good will of the King, and to ask her to come to Court, with the Prince her son (January 3, 1571).[1]

Jeanne replied to this invitation by saying that she did not for a moment doubt the good intentions of the King, but that she suspected his ministers, meaning the Cardinal of Lorraine. "I am not so ignorant," she wrote, "but that I know that all our grandeur depends on Your Majesties, and that a very humble service calls us to your feet, but I have a certain pride, and I would wish to come before you with the honour and favour which I think *I* merit more than others who seem to receive more than I."[2]

Charles IX was persistent. He believed that the Prince of Navarre, high and mighty lord though he was, should, as a vassal of the King of France, feel honoured by the choice of his sovereign.

Jeanne d'Albret remained adamant. She seemed interested only in assuring the execution of the edict of peace on its most favourable terms. It was an incident in Italian politics that

[1] *Lettres*, vol. iv, p. 22.
[2] *Lettres de Catherine*, vol. iv, notes, pp. 22 and 23.

brought about an agreement. Pius V had promised Cosmo de' Medici the title of Grand Duke of Tuscany. The Emperor Maximilian and Philip II both protested against the independent action of the Pope and the elevation of a Medici to ducal rank. Cosmo sent Fregosa to Germany to test the reaction of the Protestant princes in the event of settling the question by force of arms. After a chilly reception by the Elector Palatine in Heidelberg, who mistrusted all Papists, the emissary came to La Rochelle to consult with the Huguenots. There he found Ludovic of Nassau, whom his brother, William the Silent, had sent to propose a united action of corsairs and Huguenot buccaneers against the Spanish navy. The two men planned opposing the Catholic King by a union of France and Tuscany.

Charles IX, hearing of these proposals, welcomed the idea with enthusiasm. He chafed under his mother's strict guidance, and resented the arrogance of the Hapsburgs at Madrid, and he seized this occasion to declare his independence and to threaten his revenge. He let it be known to Cosmo that he would support him against all his enemies, and that he would expect no gain of territory in Italy, but would concentrate on Flanders.

Catherine also entered into the game of intrigue. Two Huguenot leaders who had taken refuge in England during the last civil war suggested a Protestant alliance in the form that was most likely to interest her. No less than a marriage between her favourite son, the Duke of Anjou, and the Queen of England. She was, at the time, thirty-six years old, and the Duke only eighteen; but what was a difference in age before such advantages that sprang to an ambitious mind—the crown of England, the conquest of the Netherlands, perhaps even

imperial prestige?[1] The success of any matrimonial negotiation with England depended on Huguenot influence. To secure the good graces of Jeanne d'Albret, she favoured the proposals of Ludovic, the only leader in whom that difficult lady professed to have confidence. Charles IX promised to intervene in the Netherlands if he could be sure of the help of England and Germany. The military leader of the Protestant party, Coligny, haunted by the nightmare of renewed civil wars, urged with all his force a war against Philip II as the only means of reconciling the two religions in France. Of his own accord, he offered his services for maintaining peace in the kingdom.

Catherine graciously accepted. She felt completely sure of the marriage with the Prince of Navarre, and in August began the business of the trousseau. "You must give Margaret a fine set of jewels," she wrote her son, "and if you approve, I will find them and give them to Dejardin to be set . . . and I will make the best price I can. The Comte de Retz and I will so manage for you that she will be as well turned out as her sisters, and it will not be so dear."[2]

But Jeanne d'Albret was in no hurry. She complained bitterly that the King had summoned Coligny to Court, forgetting her, and that all the marriage parleys were being carried on through a third party. As for the Court, she both wished and wished not to come. She replied to Catherine: "As for the honour which it pleases you to do me in wishing for my company, it would seem you think I forget the station from which I have the honour to come"—a reminder that she was the niece of Francis I. "I beg you to believe, madame, that it would always be with great pleasure, but I do not know why

[1] Mariéjol. *Histoire de France de Lavisse*, vol. vi, i, p. 116.
[2] *Lettres*, vol. iv, p. 59.

you tell me that you wish to see me and my children and would do us no harm. Forgive me if, in reading these letters, I wanted to laugh; for you reassure me of fears I never had, nor did I think you ate little children."[1] She stubbornly refused her consent, from religious scruples, from pride, or from plain calculation. She demanded for her daughter-in-law the dowry of Guyenne, and for herself, Lectoure. Guyenne was refused her, but she succeeded in getting the promise of Lectoure. When this point was settled, negotiations were formally opened. She sent, as Catherine wrote the Grand Duke of Tuscany, "a man to beg us to affiance my daughter to her son, following the word of my lord the King [Henry II] to the late King of Navarre," on the 8th of October, 1571.[2]

The Court of Rome now had a word to say. Margaret and the Prince of Navarre were second cousins, and as such needed a special dispensation for their marriage, and the difference of religion was even more serious than the question of kinship. The Pope declared that he would never grant the secret dispensation which the Queen Mother wanted to ease her conscience. But he also began to fear that the Most Christian King might defy the Papal authority. The only remedy he saw was to force the King of Portugal to marry Margaret. He succeeded in arousing the dispassionate King of Spain. His nephew, Cardinal Alexandrin, went on to Portugal, brought the monks to reason, and exacted the consent of the young King. Back in Madrid in December, 1571, he was joined by Philip's emissary, the Commander of the Order of Jesus, Francis Borgia, and started at once for France. But it was too late; Jeanne d'Albert was on her way to Blois, to draw up the clauses of the contract.

The Papal legate, taking the shortest possible route, reached

[1] *Lettres de Catherine,* vol. iv, p. 65. [2] *Ibid.,* vol. iv, p. 75.

Blois before her on February 7th.[1] He might perhaps have won his point with Catherine if he could have offered the hand of the Queen of Portugal or one of the Spanish princesses for the Duke of Anjou, but Philip's instructions would not permit it. After all her disappointments, it was little compensation to present to the Queen Mother the same King of Portugal who had already once refused "the most accomplished princess in Christendom." His answer was that they would let him know.

The Commander of the Order of Jesus had another delicate mission, that of seeing Margaret and dissuading her from the detestable match to which her mother and brother were forcing her. But Margaret was on her guard and she knew her duty as a daughter. Even in his confidential talks, Francis Borgia could not bring her to declare disobedience. Catherine finally swept away his false hopes and let him depart empty-handed; but to soften the blow, she hinted that Court life and the beauty of Margaret would in all probability convert the Prince of Navarre.

To avoid meeting the legate, the Queen of Navarre and her daughter stopped at Chenonceaux, where Catherine and Margaret went to join them. There the two queens had a long interview, not at all gratifying to Jeanne d'Albret. "They were in a great hurry to have me come, but they seem not to have the same haste to see me." Catherine was angry and astonished at the absence of the Prince. His mother had kept him in the south on purpose; she wanted to be the entire mistress of the situation. Catherine insisted that the marriage depended on the Prince's arranging the details. Jeanne d'Albret would not agree, being his sovereign and his mother. She knew him as impressionable and not over-devout, and she was afraid that,

[1] Baumgarten, p. 128.

carried away by the magnificence of the match and the charm of his *fiancée,* he might yield too much. The French Court even hoped that he would consent to a Catholic marriage in church. But his mother's influence held, and he wrote that nothing would draw him away from his religion.

Jeanne d'Albret could not help being touched by the welcome Margaret gave her. "I must tell you," she wrote to her son, "that she has done me every honour possible, and has told me frankly how pleasing you are to her." [1] Her daughter Catherine, quite grown up for her fourteen years, added a postscript that she thought the princess very beautiful and that she wished her brother could see her. "I begged her to hold you in good affection, which she promised, and she has treated me royally and given me a dear little dog, which I do love well." [2]

Margaret was just eighteen. The water-colour at the Museum at Chantilly was painted in this year, just before her marriage.[3] It shows the appealing head of a very young girl, hardly past childhood, with delicate oval face, high forehead, generous mouth, and full, parted lips. Portrait of innocence.

Ronsard lovingly describes the details of her perfection: her "waving hair, more dark than blond," her eyebrows like "ebony bows," her "brown eyes, tilted nose, and shell-like ear," her mouth "filled with a thousand roses, where gleam twin rows of pearls," her "slim, tender hands," her "little feet." [4]

Even Jeanne d'Albret admired her, though she writes grudgingly, "As for her beauty, I confess that she is well made, but she laces extravagantly; her face is arranged with so much art that it angers me, but at this Court paint and powder are almost as common as in Spain." [5] She adds later, "She is fair to

[1] Rochambeau, pp. 338-339.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 342.
[3] Musée Condé, Chantilly, No. 370.
[4] Ronsard, vol. ii, pp. 192-194.
[5] Rochambeau, p. 350.

see, and well instructed, and of happy manner, but brought up in the most abandoned and loose company. I would have you marry, and leave this place of corruption, which I find worse than ever. Here it is not the men who entreat the ladies, but the ladies who seek their favour." [1]

She also hoped, in the face of everything, to convert Margaret to the True Faith if only she could have a private interview with her. But Catherine forestalled all her manœuvres and the girl herself did not encourage them. On the 22nd of March they had a talk during the course of which she enquired whether Margaret would follow the religion of her son. The princess replied prudently that when it pleased God for her to follow the Prince of Navarre, she would obey him in all things reasonable, but were he the monarch of all the world, she would not change the religion in which she had been raised. Whereupon the Queen of Navarre exclaimed, "There will be no marriage," [2] and they parted abruptly.

Her next move was to insist on the ceremony's taking place in a Protestant church, following the precedent established in a tentative marriage contract between Elizabeth of Valois and little Edward VI of England, drawn up in the reign of Henry II and never carried out. As soon as Catherine heard of this contention, she swore that the betrothal agreement included a promise to have the Prince of Navarre wedded at mass, by proxy. Jeanne d'Albret protested violently that nothing like that had been mentioned, much to Catherine's amusement. The poor Huguenot queen began to write despairing letters. "I declare that I know not how I am to bear these crossings: they tease me, they prick at me, they flatter me, they defy me, they would make me pay through the nose." [3] She is miser-

[1] *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de France*, vol. ii, p. 167.
[2] Desjardins, vol. iii, pp. 757-758. [3] Rochambeau, pp. 352-353.

able. She is ill. She complains of her quarters, of spies, of double dealing and chicanery. Finally she went to Paris, and with the help of two English ambassadors proposed a compromise. She would not permit her son to remain at the Court of France and be deprived of his religion, "making him an atheist and taking away all hope of converting Madame Margaret." On the other hand, she would allow her daughter-in-law to have mass said in her private chapel in the states of Béarn and Navarre. There followed endless discussions about details of the ceremony, but by this time Jeanne d'Albret was the only one who took them seriously.

The Protestant leaders did not wish a mere surplice and stole to stand in the way of a chance to free the Netherlands, to increase the prestige of their Church, and to expand their field of activity. They offered their soldiers to form an advance guard for Charles IX. The past was forgotten, or, as Margaret would have it, "the foxes knew so well how to feign their feelings that they gained the heart of the King by promising wonderful achievements in Flanders, a project dear to his royal soul." The alliance seemed to find favour with the Queen of England and the Protestant princes of Germany. By force of circumstances, the union of Margaret and Henry of Navarre marked the complete change of French politics. Jeanne d'Albret was shrewd enough to see the advantages of the situation, quite aside from her personal feelings. By the 4th of April, all was in order. The Prince of Navarre was to accompany his wife to the church, but would not hear mass; he would wait outside, as the German princes did at the wedding of Charles IX and Elizabeth of Austria.

The contract, signed on the 11th of April, 1572, was followed by a treaty of alliance between France and England. The two powers agreed to protect each other against attack,

even if religious principles were involved. The capture of Brielles and the liberation of the villages of Zeeland gave indication of the weakening of Spanish control. Ludovic of Nassau left Paris in May, armed with ten thousand crowns and a written expression of the good will of Charles IX. Mons and Valenciennes opened their gates to him. Charles went ahead with preparations without consulting his mother. He wrote to his ambassador in Constantinople that he was about to send a naval armament of twelve to fifteen thousand men "under pretext of guarding my harbours and coasts, but actually to disturb the King of Spain, and to give encouragement to those rebels in the Netherlands. . . . All my efforts are bent to oppose the prestige of the Spaniards." [1]

Jeanne d'Albret went to Paris to be able to follow events more closely. But her strength was not equal to her indomitable will. She had been in poor health for some time, and had even been forced to take a cure before coming north. Her letters from Blois show all her nervousness. The bitterness of the negotiations, the resistance and ridicule of Catherine, her impotent rages, her misunderstandings with the Huguenot leaders, and her loneliness at a Court where she felt uncomfortable, all combined to exasperate her temper and ruin her health. Although she put up a brave struggle, her powers of resistance were exhausted. On the 4th of June she was seized with a high fever, and five days later she died.

Her sudden death came at a time when the Protestant party most needed unity and support. Elizabeth of England was still dallying with the idea of marrying the young Duke of Anjou, and had signed the alliance only to break up the old entente between France and Spain, Catholic powers. Henry Middlemore told Coligny quite frankly that England would

[1] Mariéjol, *Catherine de' Medicis*, p. 186.

never consent to any French expansion in the Netherlands.[1] The Protestant princes of Germany showed very little enthusiasm. It soon became clear that in any conflict with Philip II France would have to stand alone.

Catherine had good reason for anxiety over this venture into which her son had been drawn headlong. The Spaniards had immediately retaken Valenciennes and besieged Ludovic of Nassau in Mons. Coligny raised four thousand troops to send to his aid, but the little army was surprised and practically exterminated.

Coligny conscripted a new and larger army, and spoke of taking it into Flanders himself. Charles IX let him have his own way, hoping for a great success. "But fear seized the heart of the Queen." She dreaded the rival influence of this man who held such sway over the imagination of her son. She genuinely trembled, too, for the safety of the kingdom. After the disaster at Mons, the idea of a quiet murder must have come into her mind. Most of the Court party were opposed to a war with the foremost military power of the age.

But Coligny was determined to force the issue. Feeling sure of the good will of the King, he recruited soldiers almost openly. The Huguenot noblemen, drawn to Paris by the coming marriage of Henry of Navarre or by the rumour of warfare, spoke of changing the King's Council. The foreign ambassadors foresaw disturbances.

Catherine hardened her heart to her criminal purpose. One man was thwarting her wishes, was wresting her son from her, was endangering the King and the peace of the kingdom; that man must die. With the Guises' approval, she sent for Maurevert, who had assassinated Mouy, a Huguenot leader, in 1569, and who had served an honourable apprenticeship as

[1] Baumgarten, p. 179.

King's murderer. She would await only the celebration of her daughter's marriage before "tolling the knell" for Coligny.

Henry of Navarre, king after the death of his mother, made his state entry into Paris at the beginning of July,[1] accompanied by his cousin, the Prince of Condé, and an escort of "nigh eight hundred gentlemen, all in mourning." He was received with much honour by the King and the whole Court, Margaret writes, but she says nothing of his appearance, manners, or her own feeling for him. She could not very well admit a liking for him in view of the annulment of the marriage, nor would she wish to risk offending the King of France; so years later she maintains a discreet silence in her *Mémoires*.

He was seven months younger than Margaret, and must have seemed even more immature by comparison with this lovely girl, in the full bloom of her nineteen years. Jeanne d'Albret said that he was much taller than his cousin, who was a year older, but her proud insistence on his physical prowess would probably mean that he was of medium height and had not yet attained his full development. It is also another legend that his grandfather had made him a sturdy Béarnais by sending him out to run and play with the village children, barefoot and bareheaded, even in winter. Henry d'Albret died when his grandson was just eighteen months old, so the story loses credibility. One must admit, however, that he was more rudely brought up than the royal princes of France. When he was fifteen, his uncle, Louis of Bourbon, was killed at Jarnac, arms in hand. The boy succeeded to his position and became the head of the Protestant party. He had toiled, he had suffered, he had slept on the hard ground. But this discipline of body and spirit brought no visible attributes of

[1] Baumgarten, p. 205.

beauty, and, having been acquired at the expense of the King of France, offered no romantic glamour to Margaret. He had picked up the rough and ready manners of the camp, where cold steel showed through the tatters of a gentleman's doublet. His mother's desire to secure good tailors and embroiderers for him shows that he had no conception of the niceties of dress. What a contrast to the sons of Catherine, and especially Henry of Anjou, a very king of fashion and pattern of the exquisite.

He was temperamentally restless. Jeanne d'Albret had had a struggle to give this active, truant boy any kind of education at all. She had chosen as his tutor the learned Florent Chrestien, who gave him a good grounding in Latin, made him translate Cæsar into French, and dictated to him a commentary of Suetonius, doubtless in an expurgated form. But the pupil retained unhappy memories of the strictness of this excellent master, and when he became King of France, awarded him with ill grace "a little trifle of twenty or thirty crowns a year."[1]

He was no more amenable to the practices of religion. His mother was constantly urging him to "hear sermons and prayers," and begged his tutor to hold him "in the path of piety." Apparently all his life he had no real zeal, and far preferred to go hunting than attend the redoubtable Reformed Church.

It was his complete indifference that made Catherine decide to have done with all Papal resistance. Pius V had four times refused the dispensation she wanted. She gently reminded the nuncio, Frangipani, that Henry VIII of England had left the Church for a matter of a marriage; she suggested tactfully that no doubt the Prince of Navarre would become Catholic. But no hope of conversion or fear of schism would move the

[1] Scaligeriana, *verbo, roi de Navarre*, p. 156.

Pope. He would never permit this scandalous union of the sister of the Most Christian King with a heretic—never, even if he should lose his head for it, or have to shed his last drop of blood.[1] The Queen Mother planned to rely on the French cardinals to perform the ceremony, legalize the union, and make it indissoluble.

But Pius V died on the 1st of May, and Jeanne d'Albret on the 9th of June. Catherine believed that the young king would be easier to manage, and that the new Pope would be more conciliatory. She again requested the dispensation on the grounds of kinship. Of the religious difference there was no mention at all. Monsieur de Férals, French ambassador at Rome, was confident that the Pope would yield. But Gregory XIII, even if he ever had such an intention, quickly changed his mind, for he knew that if he granted a dispensation for the blood relationship, the Queen Mother would extend it to cover the graver issue of heresy. He replied with agreeable evasions, and settled nothing. After a period of indecisions and futile parleys, the French Court realized that no favourable answer would be forthcoming, and cut off communications with Italy.

On Thursday, the 14th of August, Catherine wrote to Mandelot, governor of Lyons, and ordered him, for love of the King and as a dutiful and obedient subject, "to let pass no courier from Rome, even if he bear communication to my lord the King, until Monday be passed."[2] Monday was the day set for the marriage. Since it took three to four days to make the journey from Paris to Lyons, Mandelot, receiving his orders on the 7th, would hold all messengers from Italy who would ordinarily have reached the Court on the 21st or 22nd. What a scandal it would have been, and what a bother, if, a

[1] Hirschauer, pp. 80-81.

[2] *Lettres*, vol. iv, p. 109.

few days after the wedding, there should have arrived a formal refusal to sanction the union!

On the 18th, the very day of the first ceremonies, Charles IX ordered Mandelot to let no messenger go through to Italy until six days should have passed. He wanted to reserve the right to inform the Pope, with all due respect, that he had dispensed with the dispensation. And so, on the next day, Catherine wrote the Pope of her firm hope that, knowing her son's good intentions, "he would hear with good heart of the solemnization of the marriage," which they had celebrated, "since they could postpone it no longer without much inconvenience." [1]

At the moment of pledging herself irrevocably, Margaret's determination seems to have weakened. She wept a great deal. Was it the Protestant who distressed her, or the man himself? Was it a physical aversion, or a moral repugnance? The die, however, was cast. The marriage contract was slightly amended, and signed on the 17th of August.

King Charles gave his sister a dowry of three hundred thousand crowns, the Queen Mother added a gift of two hundred thousand pounds, and the Duke of Anjou and the Duke of Alençon each presented her with twenty-five thousand pounds. Her husband settled on her "the full enjoyment of the fruits, profits, and revenue of the Countship of Marle, the wardship of La Fère, Han, Somme-Somme, Bohaim and Beaurevoir"; altogether, the bestowal of all his estates in Picardy. Jeanne d'Albret had claimed the right of giving Margaret from her son and herself "the rings and jewels of such value and price as shall please them." But the King of Navarre magnificently presented his wife with thirty thousand crowns' worth of jewelry, and in addition the betrothal ring,

[1] *Lettres*, vol. iv, p. 110.

set with "a diamond of the worth of ten thousand crowns." It all amounted to about a hundred thousand pounds, a very considerable sum for that period.

On the day the contract was signed, the Cardinal of Bourbon, in full regalia, betrothed the King of Navarre and Margaret of Valois in the palace of the Louvre. The following day he married them in all solemnity at the entrance of Notre-Dame, according to the agreement made by the two mothers. The Bishop's Palace, from which the bridal procession started, was south of the cathedral, and was connected by a closed gallery. But the wedding party and the Court did not use the covered way. It was the custom to let the populace gaze on the magnificent spectacles, and on this occasion it was unusually sensational, for the ceremony was to take place in plain sight right in the open air, before the great portal.

Margaret describes the scene with much satisfaction and no expression of her feelings. "Our marriage was celebrated . . . with such triumph and magnificence as has been accorded to no other of my rank. The King of Navarre and his followers had laid aside their mourning, and were clad in costly, fine garments, and all the Court was bedecked. I myself was in royal splendour, with crown and mantle of ermine, all ablaze with jewels, and with my great blue train, four ells long, borne by three princesses. A wooden runway was erected, as is customary for the weddings of the daughters of France, all the way from the Bishop's Palace to Notre-Dame, draped with cloth of gold; and people crowded in below to see us pass along with all the Court. We came to the doorway of the church, where my lord Cardinal of Bourbon received us and pronounced the proper words. We passed along on the same platform, which divided inside the church, one part leading to

the altar, the other leading outside. The King of Navarre left the church, while we . . ." [1]

Her narrative breaks off as if it were painful for her to tell how she heard Mass alone, while her husband waited in the cloisters for the ceremony to be completed. To cover her confusion she insists on the grandeur and brilliance of the wedding, the beauty of the Court, the throng of spectators; she repeats the word "triumph," as if to console herself even in memory for the subsequent sorrows of this ill-assorted match. She hides the fact that the foreign ambassadors did not attend the ceremony, and she passes over in silence the banquet given at the Palais de Justice, followed by a ball and masquerade. Perhaps out of compliment to Admiral Coligny, all the decorations suggested the sea; there were mermaids, dolphins, silvered rocks, and all manner of sea beasts, with Neptune enthroned at one end of the room. Etienne Le Roy sang for the company, and there were games and dancing.

The next day, everyone slept late, and there was barely time for the dinner given by the King of Navarre at the Hôtel d'Anjou at three o'clock in the afternoon, followed by a ball at the Louvre.[2]

On Wednesday began the celebration of "games, long prepared." The old palace of the Louvre, built in the fourteenth century, was thrown open; in the great Hall of the Bourbons was arranged a "Paradise," with the Elysian Fields stretching off behind it, "a garden, filled with greens and all sorts of flowers, arched over with an azure heaven where shone a huge wheel of zodiac, seven planets, and a multitude of tiny stars, all gleaming with artificial brilliance." Hell was marked off from Paradise by a river, with Charon offering passage, sur-

[1] Guessard, pp. 25-26.
[2] *Mémoires de l'Estat de France*, vol. i, p. 265.

rounded by a crowd of devils and little goblins, "playing tricks and keeping up a constant clatter of quips and jests."

Charles IX and his two brothers guarded the entrance to Paradise, and drove the gallants back to the river, where the devils seized them and carried them off in triumph. A ballet followed, danced by the nymphs of the Elysian Fields. The gentlemen escaped from hell and joined them, and the whole room sparkled with the polish of their armour. Finally, they set fire to fuses laid around a central fountain, and there arose a great cloud of flame and smoke that drove the company from the room.

The next day was devoted to a tournament. The lists had been decorated, and lined with platforms for the ladies. "There were contests between the King and his brothers dressed as Amazons; the King of Navarre and his followers dressed as Turks in cloth of gold, with turbans on their heads; the Prince of Condé in the costume of an Albanian brigand; the Duke of Guise, and many others all in bright array."

Feasts and balls, song and dance, knightly jousts and masquerades, the mingling of chivalric survivals, pagan memories and Christian dreams, who would have thought that this carefree entertainment would be the herald of days of bloodshed?

The Protestants, indeed, had no forebodings. At the wedding, Coligny pointed to the battle flags of Jarnac and exclaimed, "Soon we will see new and happier trophies." He was planning to go into Flanders, avenge the defeat of Genlis, relieve Mons, and pursue vigorously the attack against the Spaniards. He had no suspicions of Charles IX. But Maurevert was already on his trail. He made a secret entry into Paris on the 21st and was hidden in the lodgings of the former tutor of the Duke of Guise, barely a hundred yards from the palace. On the next day, posted behind a curtained window,

arquebus in hand, he awaited his prey. When the Admiral left the Louvre after attending a meeting of the Council, he fired, and the shot, failing of its fatal purpose, shattered Coligny's left arm. The wounded man, with great unconcern, showed his followers the house. Several gentlemen rushed to it, and found the gun still smoking; the assassin had disappeared.

The King was playing tennis when the news was brought to him. He turned pale with anger, threw down his racket, and went away without saying a word. Catherine listened to the account of the attempt in stony silence, and, summoning the Duke of Anjou, retired to her room. She had felt so sure of the skill of the murderer that she had foreseen only the death of Coligny and the inevitable confusion of the Protestant party. The event threw out all her calculations. With Coligny still alive, a search for the criminal could not be avoided, and there was grave danger of her name being implicated.

The inquest revealed the part played by the Duke of Guise's retainer. Some light began to appear. The affair seemed to be a sort of vendetta, where the young Duke wished to strike down the man he held responsible for the murder of his father.

Charles IX was furious that such a crime should have been committed during the wedding celebrations, practically within the precincts of the Louvre and under his very eyes; he swore he would have justice. "And if Monsieur de Guise," writes Margaret, "had not kept himself hidden all that day, the King would surely have taken him."[1] Excitement grew by the hour. Paris, passionately Catholic, was divided between joy and fear. The Huguenot captains and noblemen proclaimed

[1] Guessard, p. 28.

their indignation. The most violent, says Tavannes, "passed fully armed before the lodgings of Messieurs de Guise and d'Aumale." "They used," adds Brantôme, "strong language and threats, that they would strike hard, that they would kill the guilty." One Gascon gentleman even went so far as to declare at the Queen Mother's supper that they would take justice into their own hands.

Catherine was terrified. She had good reason to fear a pitched battle between the followers of the Guises and the Huguenots; with still more reason, she feared that if Guise denounced her, the civil war would break out again. The idea then came to her of saving herself and the state by conducting a wholesale massacre of Protestant noblemen. She easily convinced the Duke of Anjou and the Duke of Guise of the wisdom of this plan. She made sure of the support of the Marshal de Tavannes, the Duke of Nevers, and the Keeper of the Seal, all three men who were naturally cruel. There was no doubt of the sentiments of Paris. But an order from the King was essential. Practised as Catherine was in the art of managing her son, she doubted her power to bring him to condemn to death these noblemen whose service he had accepted and whose vengeance he had made his own. She sent Albert de Gondi, his old tutor, knowing that "he would receive him more graciously than anyone, for in him he placed full confidence and favour." Gondi represented himself as a very faithful servant, obliged to tell him that the Duke of Guise was not the sole culprit, but that the Queen Mother and the Duke of Anjou were implicated in the plot. "Ill luck would have it that Maurevert should fail," and he added, slyly, "the Huguenots are ready to accuse the Queen Mother and the Duke of Anjou; they even believe that it was done with the King's consent, and they are planning to come to blows this

very night." This lie of Gondi left the King, torn between his honour, his filial devotion, and the fear of a renewed civil war, little recourse but the massacre of the former rebels. Would the hypocrite manage to convince him of the necessity, or succeed only in confusing him? Did Catherine have to intervene to wrest from his tortured mind the word of consent? Margaret says that "there was much difficulty in making him agree, and if they had not told him that his life and kingdom were at stake, he would never have done it." [1]

Late that Saturday night the soldiers were gathered together and the town marshals were told to mobilize the popular militia, to put chains across the streets, to guard the Seine and all gates of the city.

Margaret's account, whose importance historians have overlooked, is the testimony of a witness placed in the centre of the ghastly tragedy. It is accurate in spite of certain gaps, and unconsciously allows one to fix the responsibility. Margaret knew perfectly well that her marriage, arranged for political reasons, was not a snare set to lure the Protestant leaders to Paris with the idea of exterminating them. On the other hand, the assassination of Coligny had been settled for two months. The Queen Mother was naturally vindictive, and when the interests of her children were threatened, utterly merciless. In this case, reasons of state impelled her as much as private feeling. The firebrand of earlier disturbances was dragging her son into a perilous venture, risking a direct conflict with the strongest military power of Europe. He was a "menace" which had to be removed for the good of the kingdom.

Catherine had not intended a greater crime. The threats and bravados of the Huguenot leaders, her fear of another

[1] Guessard, p. 27.

civil war, crystallized her determination to sweep all the troublesome people along in the downfall of the Admiral. Margaret assigns the chief part in the tragedy to Albert de Gondi, Catherine's tool and a curious, dangerous person.

He was eighteen years older than the King, and had a dominating influence over him. Son of a Florentine merchant living in Lyons, and a French mother, he had all the qualities of the two races—a creature subtle and shrewd, prudent and well balanced. He was clever, he was fortunate; he handled difficult negotiations with complete success; he rose without apparent effort to the highest summits of wealth and honour. Baron de Retz, through his marriage with one of the most beautiful and cultivated women of the Court, duke and peer of the realm by the favour of the King, Marshal of France without ever having commanded an army, he yet managed to avoid envy and slander by his modest bearing. To this man, wise as the serpent, Catherine confided the task of gaining the King's consent to an atrocity.

His success was astonishing. In the end, the King, with one of his sudden changes of temper, rose up "in a passion and a rage, swearing by Christ's death that since the Queen Mother and the Duke of Anjou found it safer to dispose of the Admiral, he wished it, too, and also all the Huguenots in France so that not one should remain alive to reproach him." And thereupon he commanded the order to be given "quickly."

Margaret saw the massacre of St. Bartholomew from within the Louvre. Of the actual feelings of the royal family on this night of terror, what would one know without her! On the two preceding days she noticed "everyone in a turmoil, the Huguenots infuriate at this wounding; my lords of Guise fearing that they would take justice into their own hands; whispers and asides everywhere." But no one would tell her

anything, the Huguenots holding her in suspicion as a Catholic, and the Catholics as the wife of a Huguenot. On Saturday evening there was the same air of mystery and foreboding. The Queen Mother, who was talking to "certain people," saw her sitting on a carved bench with her sister, Claude of Valois, Duchess of Lorraine, and ordered her to retire to bed. While she was making her curtsy, her sister took hold of her arm and, with tears in her eyes, tried to prevent her leaving the room. Catherine angrily called the Duchess to her side. Margaret could not hear what they said to each other, but the sharp command of her mother, repeated a second time, and her sister's distress, filled her with fear of some disaster she could not even imagine. When she reached her chamber, she fell on her knees and prayed God to guard her, "without knowing from what or from whom." All around the bed, where her husband awaited her, she found thirty or forty Huguenots, strangers to her, who talked throughout the night of the accident which had "befallen" the Admiral, "resolving to go at break of day to demand from the King the punishment of the Duke of Guise, and, if justice were denied them, to carry it out in their own way." Mindful of the tears of her sister, she could not sleep, "for reason of the terror they had stirred in her heart." All night long she did not close her eyes. At dawn, the King of Navarre got up to play a game of tennis, while waiting until the King should wake and he could demand an audience. He went out, followed by all his gentlemen, and Margaret, overcome with sleep, told her nurse to shut the door and let her rest in peace. But her slumbers were very short. An hour later she was awakened by blows that might have shattered the door, and cries of, "Navarre! Navarre!" The nurse, thinking that it was the King, ran to open it "quickly." A wounded man, "pursued by four

archers," hurled himself into the room, rushed to the bed, caught hold the Queen "across her body," and still clutching her, rolled up against the wall. Luckily, Nançay, the captain of the guard, arrived at that moment, dismissed the archers, and granted her the life of this poor suppliant.

In her *Mémoires,* Margaret has no word of blame for her mother and brother, nor for the cold-blooded murder of several thousand men who had come to Paris in friendship and trust. She does recount carefully her own agonizing uncertainty and her sleepless night. If she screamed in terror when that fugitive, bathed in blood, caught her and held her tight, she hints that she might have feared a "violence." "Finally, God willed it that M. de Nançay came in and found me in this state, and while he had pity on my plight, he could not keep from laughter." She herself was not lacking in mercy; she saved "this poor man" and had his wounds tended. In her sister's antechamber, whither Nançay conducted her, she saw the archers hack down a gentleman not three feet from her, and she nearly fainted, "as if the blow had pierced us both." Scarcely recovered from all these harrowing emotions, she went and fell on her knees before the Queen Mother to beg the life of Henri d'Albret, chief lord-in-waiting, and d'Armagnac, of her husband's household. She was deeply affected by the acts of violence she saw on every hand, torn to the quick by the cries she heard. But it was entirely a physical sensibility, a physical horror at the sight of blood. She had none of that higher kind of sensibility, moral and intellectual, inspired by the hatred of crime itself. And so slight was the value of human life, and so strong the belief in a King's absolute power, that she can write of the ghastly butchery as an unfortunate occurrence devised by a jealous fortune to spoil the "triumph of her wedding."

Throughout the story there is hardly any mention of her husband. The omissions, surely deliberate, have some special significance. When the Protestant leaders debated leaving Paris, taking their wounded chief far from a treacherous Court, the King of Navarre, with Condé and Téligny, the Admiral's nephew, was among those who vetoed the plan as a slight upon the sincerity and honourable intentions of the King.[1] To recall this intervention, she would have to admit the good faith of the Huguenot leaders, and she preferred to keep a discreet silence. She learned through Nançay that her husband was "in the King's chamber and would come to no harm."[2] But she does not speak of the conditions upon which he obtained his safety. It would have been painful for her to mention that it was under the stress of fear that he began those changes of religion which were afterward to be repeated. And so she loses the opportunity to show up one trait of his character, his deference to the authority of the King, as if he must have realized that one day he would be heir to the throne, and no longer merely the chief of the Protestant party. When Charles IX called upon him and Condé to renounce their faith, he implored the King to deal tenderly with his conscience, swearing to obey him in all else and assuring him that he would lay down his life for him. Condé, on the other hand, reproached the King for his lack of faith.[3] But in the end, both Bourbons abjured their religion.

After having depicted the massacre of St. Bartholomew as an act of precaution, a little rough, but necessary to ensure the protection of the King, Margaret makes a contradictory statement. She adds, "Five or six days later, those who had instigated the affair, knowing that they had failed in their principal

[1] De Thou, vol. vi, pp. 390-392.
[2] Guessard, p. 32.
[3] Desjardins, vol. iii, p. 824.

aim, for they bore more ill will to the princes of the blood than to the Huguenots, took it much to heart that the King, my husband, and Condé should remain. And knowing that, being my husband, he was safe from attack, they took up another design. They went to the Queen my mother to persuade her to annul my marriage."[1]

She dared not claim that she saved her husband's life by direct intercession on the day of the massacre, but she wished to let it be known that she saved him in another way. Catherine herself, aside from her respect for royal blood, thought it impolitic to strengthen the Guises at the further expense of the Bourbons. She resented their efforts to claim all the credit for the massacre in the eyes of the Pope and the Christian world. Her old friend, Cardinal of Bourbon, would be offended by any sacrifice of the chiefs of his house. Gondi, Birague, and Morvilliers seconded her. De Thou is certainly correct when he says that the Council unanimously granted the King of Navarre his life, and, at the request of the Duke of Nevers, spared Condé, too.[2]

Only the Dukes of Anjou and Guise could have regretted their decision. Perhaps Guise hoped to fall heir to the Queen of Navarre, and the Duke of Anjou to the Princess of Condé, with whom he was madly in love. With the safety of the two Bourbons guaranteed, the only remaining solution was divorce. Was it at the earnest request of the most dearly loved of her sons, who wanted to establish a precedent, or was it to reward the zeal of the Duke of Guise, that the Queen Mother sent for her daughter? She asked her to tell her, under oath, whether her son-in-law was "a man." Margaret, who so far, so she says, was in no position to make comparisons, begged her mother to believe that she was no judge in such a matter.

[1] Guessard, pp. 35-36. [2] De Thou, vol. vi, p. 393.

"But whatever she meant"—whether the marriage was consummated or not—"since she had put me into it, I would fain abide by it." She thought that Henry of Navarre's enemies, not daring to attack him while he was yet her husband, wished to separate them to "do him harm." So it was at this point, and not on the day of St. Bartholomew, that she intervened for his safety. The Queen Mother, probably as surprised at her daughter's simplicity as at her wifely devotion, did not force the issue.

Margaret certainly had a right to complain that Catherine had used her as a mere pawn in the game of politics. She had planned to marry her to the heir of Spain, a lunatic and only half a man, to the King of Portugal, who hated all women, to the Archduke Rudolph, who cared only for the beauty of the stars; finally she had given her to the King of Navarre, whom she did not love for a number of reasons. Like a good daughter and obedient subject, she had put aside the Duke of Guise—handsome and dashing, a brave soldier and a good Catholic. She probably hoped that a royal crown would make up for the sacrifice of her feelings. Perhaps she flattered herself that she would have a hold over this husband who was a little younger than herself, that she would be able to influence him, convert him and take up again that part in the political drama which she had once wanted to play with the Duke of Anjou. The massacre of St. Bartholomew shattered all her hopes of importance. The King of Navarre was Catholic, true enough, but he had no standing; he was just a prince, humiliated by his forced denial of religious principles, deprived of his dearest comrades, surrounded by enemies, and held in suspicion by the Queen Mother. But Margaret, passionate and young as she was, had a pride and sense of honour which made her incapable of abandoning her hus-

band to his ill fortune. Whatever her private feelings for him might be, she would protect him, would help him, would defend him. She would show the Queen Mother and the Duke of Anjou, that ungrateful and treacherous brother, that she was no "creature of wax," to be moulded to any will. Queen of Navarre they had made her; Queen of Navarre she would remain.

CHAPTER THREE

THE END OF THE REIGN OF CHARLES IX

HER married life began under very trying circumstances. There was none of the independence, dignity, or brilliance of prestige she had expected. She continued to live at the Louvre, just as she had in the days before her marriage. She had no Court, and her household was not even appointed until October, 1572. Henry of Navarre was not allowed out of sight. The Guises were in high favour and took no pains to hide their delight at the disgrace of the House of Bourbon. Henry of Navarre was treated on all sides like a Court page or lackey, who would come running at every beck and whim.

Margaret, to her credit be it said, played her part well. She gave her personal guarantee to Charles IX and the Queen Mother for the obedience and good behaviour of this former rebel chief, but she was not in love with him. The reason alleged was that she was a Catholic, had given her heart to a Catholic, and then been forced to marry a Huguenot. But there are hints in the *Mémoires,* carefully veiled, which seem to show another reason for her emotional indifference. Margaret will say no word directly, but one gets the impression of a physical aversion. It is well established on other evidence that the King of Navarre was neither fastidious in his person nor circumspect in his habits.[1] Perhaps his wife did not make sufficient effort to conquer her repugnance, perhaps he re-

[1] *Divorce Satyrique,* Réaume, vol. ii, p. 664.

sented her half-hearted affection. At any rate, their relations soon developed into friendship and good understanding. Margaret's conduct seems to have been above reproach. For a long time she was a devoted companion, and never forgot that she was the Queen of Navarre.

The Court could not believe in any lasting constancy in this loveless household. Guise thought that his hour had come. Perhaps the "untying of the knot" which the Queen Mother proposed to her daughter heralded her intention of remarrying her to this old suitor, by far the most eligible match in France since the downfall of the King of Navarre. Margaret says nothing of any such proposal. She would have had to admit the love affair before her marriage, and at the time she wrote her *Mémoires* she was trying to ignore it. But Scipion Dupleix, her secretary, writes, "Many a time I have heard Queen Margaret say that after she had given her affections to the King of Navarre, the Queen Mother spoke to her of loving the Duke of Guise, and that she invariably replied that she had not a heart of wax." She made it very clear to those who hoped to profit by the misfortunes of her husband to revive the embers of a past love that she had quite different ideas.

At her marriage banquets, the Duke of Anjou had fallen violently in love with the Princess of Condé, Marie de Clèves, who was also unhappily married. This young lady, lively and witty, had married Henry of Bourbon, fanatic Huguenot, uncouth and jealous by nature. The Duke, young, handsome, with a halo of military glory, easily won her heart. They both sought opportunities to meet, away from the crowd at Court. And to lull any suspicions of her husband, the Princess thought she could enlist Margaret, who often had expounded the virtue of love, in her little escapade. Philippe Desportes describes the "adventure" under the transparent disguise of fic-

titious names. "Olympe" wants to have "Fleur-de-lys" as a companion in "this pleasure," and as if taking a walk, leads her to a little chapel at the end of the old palace, a Chapel of Love. But when Fleur-de-lys sees the three knights waiting there, she stands "overwhelmed" with surprise, distaste, and anger. In spite of the entreaties of Euryleas (the Duke of Anjou), the sighs of Nirée (the Duke of Guise), and the tears of the Princess, she leaves Guise to his despair, the others to their lovemaking, and goes quickly away.

The little incident shows Margaret's whole point of view. She may have believed that this meeting concealed some trap; the sight of her brother strengthened her suspicion. What new treachery might he not be planning? Did he want to rekindle a girlish infatuation and drag her through the indignity of a divorce? She was very sensitive and proud, and indignant at the cheap trick. No explanations, no appeals, no avowals from an ardent lover could move her. And harsh memories of the past remained like a wall between this brother and sister.

Catherine hopefully believed that she had crushed the Protestant party with the murder of its leaders, but the auxiliary massacres in the provincial towns went on intermittently until October and gave the majority of the Huguenots time to escape. The survivors organized active resistance. Montauban, Nîmes, Aunenas, and Privas shut their gates. La Rochelle, where fifty-five ministers, fifty noblemen who had escaped the massacre, and fifteen hundred deserters from Strozzi's fleet had taken refuge, appealed to Elizabeth of England for help against their faithless government. A royal army, under the command of the Duke of Anjou, besieged the place without much success in spite of truceless cannonade, repeated assaults on the crumbling ramparts, and vain efforts of the English to

raise the blockade. In time, the town would have fallen, but events in Poland changed the course of French politics.

The last of the Jagellons, Sigismund Augustus II, died without male issue, and a Diet had assembled on July 7, 1572 to elect his successor. The enterprising House of Austria, already mistress of Bohemia and Hungary, had put forward one of her numerous archdukes. Catherine was tempted to put a spoke in the Hapsburg wheel, and secure a crown, even a distant one, for her favourite son. She sent off the subtlest of her diplomats, Jean de Monluc, Bishop of Valence. He reached Poland at the same time as the news of St. Bartholomew. Excitement and resentment were intense in that country where there were many Protestants and where the Catholic aristocracy professed extreme tolerance. But the Queen's smooth-tongued emissary, by representing the wholesale slaughter as a measure of public safety, transformed into bloodshed only by uncontrolled popular fury, turned the course of the general feeling. The majority of the Diet declared for the French Prince on May 9, 1573. The Protestants and their friends inserted, all the same, in the terms of the oath which the new king would be obliged to swear, a solemn pledge to maintain religious peace. For fear of alienating the sympathy of the Poles, Catherine was forced to raise the siege of La Rochelle. Charles IX granted the Protestants freedom of conscience in all the kingdom and freedom of worship in the three cities of La Rochelle, Nîmes, and Montauban. The blood-stained advantages of the shambles of St. Bartholomew were thus thrown away for the sake of a name's prestige and a family triumph.

The Court of France celebrated the election of Poland as a great national and dynastic victory. The Polish ambassadors, who had come to pay homage to their new King, and administer to him the oath of the *Pacta Conventa,* made their state

entry into Paris on the 19th of August, 1573. Catherine "received them magnificently in her Palace of the Tuileries; and after supper in the great hall, specially decorated and studded with an infinity of torches, she presented to them the most beautiful ballet ever performed in all the world." [1]

Margaret had a tremendous success for her beauty, elegance, and flowing speech. On the day of the great feast "she was dressed in a gown of crimson Spanish velvet, all worked with sparkling gems, and a head-dress of the same velvet trimmed with plumes and jewels. So beautiful did she seem in this attire, that afterward she wore it often, and had her portrait painted therein." [2] When the Poles went to pay their respects to her, Adam Konarski, Bishop of Posen, addressed her on behalf of them all in Latin. Margaret answered him "so pertinently and so eloquently, without the aid of any interpreter, having so well understood his speech, that all fell into a great amazement, and with one voice they hailed her as a second Minerva, or Goddess of Eloquence." [3] They found still more pleasure, however, in looking at her. She seemed to them "so beautiful, so superbly and richly adorned and bedecked, with such dignity and grace, that all stood lost at so much loveliness." Among them, Laski, Palatine of Siradia, exclaimed as he went away, "Never do I wish to look on woman again, after seeing such beauty." [4]

It is hard to believe that the King of Poland would have brought the Duke of Guise to the palace had he not hoped to find Margaret there with Marie de Clèves. He doubtless thought that in favouring a lovers' meeting he could regain his own place in his sister's affections. He had too many enemies, to leave another one in close touch with the Queen

[1] Brantôme, vol. vii, pp. 371-372.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. viii, pp. 33-34.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. viii, p. 40.
[4] *Ibid.*, vol. viii, p. 25.

Mother. Even in the royal army there were men of all sorts of different and violent views. The rebellious element centred around the Duke of Alençon, Catherine's third son, "a young hothead," who even as a child was "full of warfare and strife." He had attached himself to Coligny, who had promised him a principality in Flanders, and, when he heard of Maurevert's attempt on his life, had had the courage to cry out, "What treachery!" This was the leader the Protestants needed to sanction a renewed insurrection, the brother of the King himself, a son of France.

The discontented factions of both religions hated the Duke of Anjou; they blamed him for St. Bartholomew, they suspected his good faith. He was going far away, leaving hatred behind him, and only half assured of the sympathy of Charles IX. His mother was his principal support, the guarantee of his future. Now, even more than in 1569, it was vital for him to keep hostile influence away from her. He might well fear that Margaret, whose charm and intelligence he had just begun to appreciate, would prove, to his ruin, the truth of the saying, "out of sight, out of mind." So he thought it wise to propitiate her and make her a friend and an ally. The idea of using Guise as a prize in these manœuvres proved ill advised, but even then he did not despair of securing her good will. "The King of Poland," writes Margaret, "tried by *every means* to make me forget the ill services of his ingratitude, and restore our affection to the same perfection of our early years, wishing to bind me by oaths and promises when he bade me farewell." [1]

She does not say that she agreed, but the Chancellor Cheverny, who was present at their parting, states that the Queen of Navarre swore "much friendship" to the King of Poland.[2]

[1] Guessard, p. 37.

[2] *Mémoires*, p. 231.

This oath, though quickly forgotten, explains Margaret's early attitude towards the malcontents.

The King of Poland put off his departure as long as he could, so delightful did he find France and the Princess of Condé. But Charles IX, ill and irritable, kept urging him to rejoin his subjects as soon as possible. Catherine begged him to go where he could win "fame and glory." Rumour had it that the Guises wanted to kidnap him and retain him in France as the leader of the Catholic party. Charles IX was more anxious than ever to get him out of the kingdom. He accompanied him as far as he could, and stopped only at Vitry, where he was forced to take to his bed. Catherine went on with the Duke of Anjou to the border of Lorraine, on the German frontier.

Her foreign policy had always been a matter of personal feeling and maternal ambition. Through jealousy and fear she had ordered the assassination of Coligny and the massacre of his followers, but when she received no reward from Philip II of Spain, she turned in a rage to the Protestant powers. She explained to the Queen of England and to the Calvinist and Lutheran princes of Germany that she had been forced to attack the Huguenots as a measure of defence. She sent Ludovic of Nassau three hundred thousand crowns with which to help his brother, William of Orange, in the revolt against Spain. She awaited him at Blamont, and there discussed with the son of the Elector Palatine an agreement between France and Protestant Germany. The King of Poland promised "to take under his protection the interests of the Netherlands." [1]

Under cover of this alliance for the liberation of the Netherlands, Catherine secured for the King of Poland an unmolested passage through Germany, where feeling had been very strong

[1] Letter of Ludovic, Groen van Prinsterer, vol. iv, p. 279.

on account of St. Bartholomew. But that was the only positive result she did obtain. The Edict of Boulogne could not reëstablish the confidence that her crime had wrecked. The Huguenots continued to be "restless and ill at ease," and many Catholics sympathized with them. First one and then the other party urged the Duke of Alençon to claim the post of Lieutenant-General, left vacant by his brother. They took up again the stand of Coligny: complete liberty of religion within the kingdom, and armed intervention in the Netherlands. Careful as she was to keep Ludovic of Nassau and the young Duke apart, Catherine could not prevent secret messages, confidential agreements, and even direct contacts passing between them. Ludovic wrote to his brother, "I have seen my lord the Duke of Alençon, who pressed my hand and whispered to me that he would use all his influence on your behalf."[1] Charles IX, glad enough to be rid of one brother's dominance, declared that he would not appoint another lieutenant-general. Then the enemies of Catherine and the Huguenot leaders incited the disgruntled Alençon to open revolt. In the west, La Noue was stirring up the Protestants who had cravenly renounced their faith. Ludovic of Nassau was ready to intervene with the soldiers that Catherine's money had helped him raise.

The Duke of Alençon and the King of Navarre had reconciled their respective hatreds, ambitions, and fears at the siege of La Rochelle. At Vitry they cemented their bonds "more closely through affection than through memory of the past." They planned to escape from the Court and establish themselves at Sedan, a fortified frontier town where a Protestant, the Duke of Bouillon, was sovereign prince. Between Soissons and Compiègne a band of Huguenots would meet them

[1] Letter of Ludovic, Groen van Prinsterer, vol. iv, p. 281.

to serve as escort, or if need be as a skirmishing force. From their place of vantage they could dictate their own terms to the King.

Margaret received warning of this plot from Henri d'Albret, the King of Navarre's chamberlain, whose life she had saved at St. Bartholomew. She went at once to the King and the Queen Mother, and after exacting a promise that no harm would come to those whose names she would mention, she told them that her husband and her brother "were to go the next day to join an approaching band of Huguenots." Twice she repeats, as if to gloss over this treasonous plan, that the Huguenots had forced the two Princes to give a written promise to avenge Coligny's death, and that they should be forgiven for agreeing, "being such children."[1] She begged that the matter be handled very tactfully, so that "not knowing whence came the check, they would never have means of escaping."

Of the motives which led her to play the part of informer she has nothing to say, but it is easy to reconstruct them. She loved Charles IX and the Queen Mother, and she had as yet no desire to cross them. Moreover, the memory of her promise at Blamont was still fresh in her mind. True to her word, she broke up a conspiracy that threatened the peace of the kingdom, and might possibly have affected the succession in the event of Charles IX's death. But she does not boast of this service, so that she will not have to explain her change of heart some months later, when she belied her oath and fell back on her old antagonism to the King of Poland. Cheverny says that Margaret would have been true to her attachment to him "had she not been turned therefrom."

The Court came back to Saint-Germain, there to make a "long residence, because of His Majesty's illness." And there

[1] Guessard, pp. 37-38.

Margaret had time to get acquainted with her youngest brother, with whom she had never had "great intimacy, for that he had always been brought up away from the Court." He set out to make himself very agreeable to this sister, whom he wanted for friend and partisan, "using all manner of devices and means." He won her, she says, "by so much submissiveness, humility, and affection" that she resolved "to love him, and take his interest as her own, in all things save in any contrary to King Charles, whom she honoured above all else." Whether Margaret intended it or not, this clause implied a threat to the King of Poland. She acted by a revulsion of feeling; for good or ill, she was taking sides with her youngest brother. "He continued," she says, "to show me this devotion, which he was ever to show to me until the end."[1] She did not stop to think that Charles IX was dying and that ambition would, in all probability, make him declare against the legal successor. The prejudices of the past and the attraction of the present swayed her judgment. All her life she was a slave to emotional impulses.

The Duke of Alençon was now, in 1574, nineteen years old. He was graceful and cultivated, skilled in all sports, and a great reader of Plutarch; but he was volatile and light-minded, as thoughtless as a child, says Ambassador Cavalli; heartless and brainless, says Ludovic of Nassau.[2] Turenne, who lived with him for some years and who was grateful to him for his sympathy towards the Protestants, says more kindly that his natural qualities were good, but that he was spoiled "by bad examples and the society of vicious persons."[3] He was of medium height, dark in colouring, and as a child had had handsome, regular features. But he had suffered an attack of

[1] Guessard, p. 38.
[2] Kervyn de Lettenhove, vol. iii, pp. 107-109.
[3] Turenne, pp. 18-19.

small-pox, "so violent that it changed his whole aspect . . . and comely as he was, he became one of the ugliest men alive, and even his mind was not so sprightly as formerly." [1]

This brother had a favourite, a gentleman from Provence, Joseph Boniface, Seigneur de La Molle, a handsome creature, with a fine figure and the best dancer at Court since the death of Comte de Brissac. The ladies fought for the attention of this irresistible suitor, and a number of men hated him cordially. The King of Poland had begged his mother to dismiss him from Court because he was afraid this "mountebank" might pay court to the Princess of Condé, his own private inamorata. The King of Navarre disliked him, too. Could it have been that Margaret found him too attractive? Charles IX, on the contrary, was devoted to him. Catherine wrote later to the French ambassador in England that "he did him honour and favour, not as to a subject and servant, but as if to a beloved comrade." [2]

But the fate of La Molle was not to be a happy one. The King was apt to pass abruptly from affection to enmity. The Queen Mother hated him because she believed he was embittering the ill feeling between the Duke of Alençon and the King of Poland. The favourite exploited his influence over his master, and did not pay sufficient respect to important personages. He rashly had enticed his cousin, Ventabren, from the service of the Duke of Guise to attach him to that of his Prince. The Duke, to avenge a desertion which he considered an insult, attacked his faithless follower one day at Saint-Germain. Leaving him for dead, he rushed to sue the King's pardon for having drawn his sword within the royal palace. La Molle arrived at almost the same moment, demanding

[1] Turenne, pp. 19-20.

[2] *Lettres*, vol. iv, p. 296.

justice, and according to Turenne, "spoke in language heated and overbold."

It was not, however, his insolence that lost him Charles IX's favour, but "a matter resting more on love."[1] One night, d'Estoile relates, the King stood at the top of a stairway in the Louvre with the Duke of Guise and several gentlemen who had planned to strangle La Molle with a rope when he should leave the room of the Duchess of Nevers. Fortunately for the Lothario, instead of going down to the apartments of his master, the Duke of Alençon, he set off to find his mistress. This mistress, as general rumour would have it, was Margaret of Valois. The King could not accuse his sister without an appalling scandal, and, fond of her as he was, he was very anxious to get rid of the man who was compromising the virtue of the ladies of the royal house. If La Molle had any suspicion of this plan of rough-handed justice, or if he noticed Charles's coldness, it would readily explain his part in the subsequent disorders.

From December, 1573, to February, 1574, the Duke of Alençon renewed his intrigues with La Noue, Turenne, and the disaffected parties of both religions. He was still planning to escape to Sedan. Ludovic of Nassau would supply him with a good troop of *lansknechts* and *reiters*. Montgomery, one of Coligny's best officers, was assembling a fleet in England to attack the coast of Normandy. La Noue was elected military leader by the Protestants in the west in January, 1574.

An insurrection was being organized to give the Duke of Alençon a place in the government, and to secure religious satisfaction, but the preparations would have stopped short if Charles IX had died in the middle of them. His successor was

[1] *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de France,* Cologue, 1719. 2 vols. Vol. i, pp. 30-31.

far away, and the majority would declare for his younger brother, hating the future king as the chief criminal of St. Bartholomew.

La Noue opened hostilities on the night of Shrove Tuesday, the 23rd of February, and set the 10th of March for the Princes' flight. But Chaumont-Quitry, who was supposed to come up to Saint-Germain to meet them and escort them on their way, appeared before Mantes ten days too soon. The conspirators were taken by surprise; they had "neither chance nor strength to withdraw." At the news, the Court seethed with alarm and no one knew the cause of the disturbance. "The excitement was very great, baggage was trussed up, the Cardinals of Lorraine and Guise leapt to horse to escape from Paris, and many others followed their example." The drums of the Swiss Guards and the French companies resounded in the meadows. The Duke of Alençon, in a panic, went to his mother, and the mystery was explained. Catherine decided that the Court should go that very night to Paris for greater safety. She took the King of Navarre and the Duke of Alençon in her own coach. The King waited until the next morning and entered the town with his Swiss Guards, going directly to the Faubourg Saint-Honoré to the *hôtel* of the Marshal de Retz.[1]

Margaret denies any knowledge of this plot. She says nothing of the way in which her brother betrayed the conspirators, nor of the pressure La Molle brought to bear to bring him to such a course. If one is to believe her, "suspicion" was the only reason for the arrests and executions which followed. It was, of course, the best way to clear La Molle and defend herself from the charge of having been the mistress of a rebel subject. As a matter of fact, the truth is quite different. Charles IX

[1] Cheverny, p. 232.

pardoned the Princes, but he took them with him to the castle of Vincennes, where he went for his health. They were kept under surveillance when the revolt in the west began to spread, and when Montgomery landed on the coast of Normandy. The orders were not so strict, however, but that the Duke was able to come to Paris "on matters of the heart" and visit the Duchess of Retz, "his very dear friend." It was easy enough for him to be at his tricks again. Both he and the King of Navarre decided once more to make off for Sedan. This time La Molle, whose chief virtue was a devotion to his master, did all he could to hasten the preparations for flight. He undertook to collect the necessary men and money. Associated with him were Coconat, ruthless murderer of August 24th; Grandchamp, a famous spinner of webs and intrigues, and La Fin la Nocle. Turenne, in a wary fashion, kept on the edge of the conspiracy. Various bizarre characters were connected with the enterprise—Grantrye, who boasted of the possession of the Philosopher's Stone and all the arts of alchemy; Cosmo Ruggieri, who made his living concocting love philtres and telling fortunes; and a good many other picturesque adventurers.

Finally, the Princes' departure was arranged for Saturday, April the 10th. Great ladies were in the secret—Margaret of Valois, the Duchess of Retz, and the Duchess of Nevers. Somehow, Catherine got wind of it. The Marshal Montmorency, who disapproved of the entire business and who feared being implicated, handed over a letter from one of the conspirators. A citizen of Paris, employed by Grandchamp, denounced the plot and even gave the date of its execution. The King, enraged by such treachery, following a recent pardon, seized the Duke of Alençon and the King of Navarre,

and put them under heavy guard. La Molle was arrested within the palace walls; Coconat was taken prisoner in the Convent of the Augustinians, where a great lady had hidden him; La Fin, Grandchamp, and Turenne escaped.

The King did not wish to bring his brother and brother-in-law before the Parliament composed of peers of the realm, and he had them examined by a special commission. The Duke of Alençon talked freely about the hopes Coligny had given him for a principality in Flanders, and about his alliance with the survivors of the massacres; in the course of his account of the origins of the plot, he succeeded in compromising all the conspirators, and none more than his faithful La Molle. The King of Navarre, with more caution, did not get anyone into trouble. He read a statement in which he defended himself, while claiming at the same time no judge but the Queen Mother and the King. The reasons he alleged to excuse his flight were, his personal grievances, the death of his friends at St. Bartholomew, the threat of further violence, the enmity of the Queen Mother, the power of the Guises, and a desire to return to his own states of Béarn and Navarre, where his authority was in danger. He skilfully slipped in a reference to the rumour of Vitry that the Guises had been planning to make the King of Poland King of France, implying that his own life was threatened.

In spite of promises, his statement went on, he and the Duke of Alençon continued to fear for their lives. When the Duke sent him word that he was planning to leave the Court, he had bethought him of following him and retiring to Navarre. Finally he intimated that if the King and the Queen Mother would do him the honour to treat him as the kind of person he really was, he would show them his earnest

desire to be "to them both, a very humble, faithful, and obedient servant." [1]

This masterpiece of equivocation came from Margaret's hand. "God," says she, "graciously enabled me to set it forth so well that he was greatly satisfied, and the commissioners were amazed to see him so well prepared." [2]

Reasons of state entirely justified stern measures, and it was only their royal blood that saved the Princes from paying the supreme penalty. La Molle and Coconat were the victims. They were found guilty of high treason and were condemned to be beheaded on the scaffold, their bodies to be drawn and quartered, and their heads to be stuck on pikes at the Place de Grève. No foreign sympathies could save them. The Queen of England interceded for them, but Catherine replied coldly that she greatly wished to reconcile the Duke of Alençon and the King of Poland, and that it was necessary to do away with such seditious characters. Among her reasons, it was hinted that there was one which "could not be spoken of." And this probably refers to La Molle's intimacy with Margaret.

The two condemned men were taken to the Chapel of the Conciergerie, and "were bound fast to two rings, like men awaiting death." [3] Their despair expressed itself in accusations, not against the Princes, but against the Marshal Montmorency, Damville and Turenne. These were the ones, cried La Molle, who should be made to suffer. Coconat, stamping his foot, exclaimed, "You see, my lords, the humble are punished, and the mighty, who are truly responsible, abide in safety." The Duke of Alençon made a supreme effort to save these men who were to die for his fault and in his cause. He

[1] Guessard, pp. 185-194.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 40.
[3] *Archives Curieuses*, vol. viii, p. 283.

went down on his knees to his brother and the Queen Mother to beg their lives, or at least to spare them the mortification of public execution. Catherine persuaded the King to have it done in secret, but the King's messenger was delayed at the Saint-Antoine gate, and when he reached the palace it was too late.[1]

It was the custom, to prevent any abuse of royal pardons, to have the executions follow immediately upon the sentence of death. So the two men were led out to the scaffold in the Place de Grève. La Molle, who was to be dispatched first, "having been admonished to speak truth and free his conscience," declared that Cosmo Ruggieri was not in the plot, but that Grantrye was. He was forced to his knees and admonished again. He replied that he knew no more. Then a handkerchief was tied over his eyes, and while he held the cross and the choir chanted the *"Salve Regina,"* his head was struck off at a single blow.

Coconat asked the people to pray for him, had the executioner take off the bandage, and then he too was beheaded.

Many legends sprang about this sensational trial, where the highest names in the land were common property. One story claims that La Molle, on the way to the scaffold, begged to be remembered to the Queen of Navarre and "the ladies." But it seems an improbable indiscretion.

As soon as the King of Poland heard of the scandal and arrest, he urged the most degraded form of punishment for the scoundrels, the hanging reserved for only thieves and vagrants.[2] But in Paris there were many displays of affection and sorrow. The mistresses of the victims openly expressed their grief. Brantôme does not name them, but it is easy to see

[1] *Lettres de Catherine,* vol. iv, pp. 303-304, note.
[2] Groen van Prinsterer, vol. iii, p. 375.

in his descriptions of lamentations and mourning the figures of the Duchess of Nevers and the Queen of Navarre. There is a legend that these tearful ladies even retrieved their lovers' heads, had them embalmed, and cherished them as tender relics.[1]

La Molle was right in his prophecy that his death would cost the lives of many men.[2] Montmorency was seized and thrown into the Bastille as a precaution, Damville was relieved of his post in Languedoc. Bad news came in from the west, where Montgomery was making advances in Normandy. Anxiety broke down the remains of the King's health. He was bent on doing away with the politicians who threatened all his peace and security.

The Duke of Alençon, indeed, exaggerated his personal danger, for Catherine would never have consented to any spilling of her own blood. But he was thoroughly frightened and appealed to England. Margaret, too, wanted to help free her brother and her husband, even at the risk of losing the affection of the King. She did not think of the danger to the state if these two Princes should appear at the head of the rebel army.

Every day she went to visit the prisoners at Vincennes, coming and going quite freely in her coach, with no interference from the guards. She had the inspiration of disguising the King of Navarre or the Duke of Alençon as a woman, and taking him off with her. But she adds, maliciously, "but as only one could go with me, they could never agree which one should go and which should remain behind, each one being anxious to escape."[3]

"This design could not be carried out," she says, "but the

[1] *Mémoires du Duc de Nevers*, vol. i, p. 75.
[2] *Archives Curieuses*, vol. viii, p. 216. [3] Guessard, p. 40.

Princes were saved in a manner most unhappy for me." Charles IX died, the brother against whom she had not scrupled to weave intrigues and seditious plots. She had good reason to deplore his loss—"the whole support of my life," one who "ever aided, warned, and counselled me." [1]

"In him have I lost all that I had in the world to lose." And this characteristic little elegy is the prelude to a new chapter in her life, a prolonged struggle with Henry III.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN HENRY III AND THE DUKE OF ALENÇON

THE new reign was to be a time of trial for Margaret. Henry III came back from Poland determined to punish her for having deserted his cause. And although she appears unconscious of her breach of faith, she dreaded from the bottom of her heart meeting this brother, now her King, who could so easily carry out any sort of revenge.

As soon as he heard of the death of Charles IX, Henry III fled from Cracow, to prevent any possibility of being forcibly detained by the Poles, and travelling through Austria and Italy, Catholic countries, he made his way slowly to Lyons, where Catherine and the Court awaited him. The Queen Mother had brought the King of Navarre and the Duke of Alençon in her own coach, prisoners to all intents and purposes, with whom the new King would have to deal.

It was naturally something of a crisis for Margaret. She says that in spite of the heat of the day, while her mother was welcoming and embracing her brother, she was seized with a "sudden chill" and a "great shuddering" through all her body. This foreboding of misfortune she believed came as a warning from God, though it might have been the stirring of an uneasy conscience. But at any rate, it was a sign that there were dark days ahead.

Immediately after the execution of La Molle, Margaret had

consoled herself with another lover. She never loved, it seems, two men at a time, but it is true enough that if her heart had room for only one, it was never empty long. Charles de Balzac d'Entragues was successor to the unfortunate La Molle. So handsome was he, that he was known as "The Beautiful d'Entragues." His long, severe face, his haughty air, his commanding eyes were those of a man who imposes his will on women, and uses them to his advantage. For many years, after his affair with Margaret, his mistress was the Duchess of Retz, another intellectual, free in her affections, formerly the flame of the Duke of Alençon. Henry III suspected his sister's amorous intrigue, and watched hopefully for some open indiscretion. This he could report to the King of Navarre and force him, tolerant as he was, to take definite action against his wife.

But in his eagerness he overshot the mark. The Court remained at Lyons for several weeks, while preparations for a campaign against Damville were being discussed. The King, the Queens, and the Princes lodged in the archbishop's palace, on the right bank of the Saône, and in the ecclesiastical quarter near the Cathedral of St. John. One day the two Duchesses of Nevers and Retz asked Margaret to take a drive into the city and go visit St. Peter's Abbey, a nunnery for noble ladies. The ladies got into the Queen's chariot, accompanied by two slightly ribald gentlemen who wanted to have a look at the "fair nuns," and drove off to the town. The convent stood in a square, surrounded by houses in which lived many of the gentlemen of the Court, among them, d'Entragues. Margaret left her carriage, "all gilded, and lined with yellow and silvered velvet," at the door. Shortly afterward Henry III passed by with some of his favourites and the King of Navarre. When he saw his sister's carriage near the lodging

of d'Entragues, who was supposed to be ill, he pointed to it and remarked to his brother-in-law, "I would wager she is there." He sent Ruffec, a boor of a man, to find out. He found no one there, but, being a clever courtier, he came back and said, "The birds have been there, but they have flown."

Henry III did not succeed in arousing the King of Navarre's jealousy, for he knew it was to his interest to keep on good terms with his wife, but with Catherine it was quite another story. Lenient enough to all her sons' moral lapses, she was very particular about the "honour" of her daughters. The minute Margaret got in from the little expedition, she sent for her and proceeded to "spit fire and say all that an uncontrolled and passionate wrath can utter." In spite of protests and explanations, she continued to "chide, scream, and threaten." But the next day, when Henry learned through Margaret's companions of the "error of the coarse-minded Ruffec," he begged his mother to "patch up the matter in such fashion that his sister should not remain his enemy." [1]

Catherine again sent for her daughter, and accused a footman of the slander by which she had been deceived. But Margaret was well aware of the author of "this little charity." The King, who had been listening to his mother's stumbling efforts to smooth over the whole business, came into the room and made personal excuses. But he could not convince her that he had been "imposed upon." She recounts this incident with a wealth of detail, as if such innocent excursions were the only ones she ever enjoyed. Henry III surely should have realized that his sister would hardly go to visit a sick lover in broad daylight and leave her carriage at the door to advertise the fact. He would have to wait for a better opportunity to bring about his revenge.

[1] Guessard, pp. 47-50.

HENRY 3.e ROY DE FRANCE, et de POLOGNE. Fils d'henry II.e Et de Cath.ne de Medicis. Nasquit en 1574. en 1573. et reuint prendre par la mort de Charles IX. Son Frere en 1574. il fit Sacrer a Reyms. Il Espousa Loüise de Lorraine fille du Comte de Vaudemont en 1575. Il Institua l'Ordre du S.t Esprit. Il fut Sacré et Couronné le 13.e May en 1575. Sous le Regne de Charles IX. se rallumerent les guerres Civiles qui auoient trauaillé le Royaume l'espace de 10. ans. Le Prince de Condé, le Duc d'Alençon, rebellerent au Roy, Entrerent en France, Duec vne Armée Estrangere, le Duc de Guyenne, et les Protestans de la mauuaise foy ordinaire. Vn 1.er Party, Sous le titre de la S.te Vnion, les Catholiques, et des Huguenots, par apres le Roy de Nauarre, et le P.ce de Condé, les declarans hors la Loy. Comencerent en 1585. le Pape Sixte V.e excõmunia le P.ce de Nauarre, et le P.ce de Condé, les declarans incapables de Succeder a la Couronne, de droit acquis, par la mort du Duc d'Alençon, Ces 2 P.ces firent ce qu'ils peurent pour iustifier leurs pretentions, en 1587. le roy de Nauarre, gaigna la bataille de Coutras, ou le Duc de Ioyeuse fut tué, mais le Duc de Guyse, y gaigna Celle d'Auneau, pres de Chartres, en 1588. ce Duc fut apres receu a Paris, auec Acclamation du peuple, le Roy voyant ces Emotions populaires, en faueur des Guyse, Valoux de Son authorité et mes ce Croy.t pas en Seureté en la Ville de Paris, en Sortit en Colere, et resolu de la perdre, et le Duc ce qui fut au Estats de Blois, ou ce Duc, et le Card.l son frere furent tuez, le Duc de Nemours, et inta Paris, aupres du Duc d'Aumalle, qui y Commandoit, par Ordre des Seize, le Duc de Moyenne ce retira en Bourgogne, Pend.t tout ces troubles le Duc de Sauoye S'empara du Marq.t de Saluces, Apres la mort des Guyse, les meilleures Villes, se remirẽt a l'Obeissance du roy qui Vint, et dura Paris, la Capitalle, Vint auec le Roy de Nauarre, la Assieger, et Estant a S.t Cloud, auec Son Armée, il fut tüé, d'vn Coup de Cousteau, dans le Ventre, par vn Iacobin, nõme Iacq.s Clement, le 1.er d'Aoust 1589. Age de 38. ans, Et en fut la Maison des Valois.

It was not entirely spite and malice that prompted him. He knew that Margaret had reconciled the Duke of Alençon with the King of Navarre, and that an understanding between those two Princes would be dangerous to him. If he could break up the Navarre household, he would by the same stroke destroy the alliance, for the young Duke was too devoted to his sister not to take sides with her against his brother-in-law. He was planning an active campaign against Damville, while three other armies operated in the south and west. There were many risks, which made it all the more politic to try to nullify any alliances by playing off one leader against another. But Margaret, full of her own innocence, warned her husband to keep a watchful eye on all the ruses the King might produce to estrange him and the Duke of Alençon. And she made them "swear a new oath for the maintenance of their love and friendship." [1]

Margaret has little to say of all the events which took place after the Court left Lyons. The coronation of Henry III, his defeat at Avignon, his failure against Damville, his humiliating retreat before the rebel forces of Languedoc, the insolent ultimatum of the Church deputies, the recruiting of an army in Germany to come to the aid of the French Protestants—these are incidents she prefers to forget. Nor would she care to admit that in cementing the union between her husband and the Duke of Alençon she had been playing the game of the heretics.

Her *Mémoires* of this period are full of abuse for one Le Gast, who was doing his utmost to serve his King, his country, and his religion. No other did she hate so fiercely; she called him the author of all her misfortunes, the evil genius

[1] Guessard, pp. 49-50.

of Henry III, and a "very firebrand of hatred and discord." In all probability he did not deserve her slander. He was cultivated and delighted in entertaining writers, scholars, and churchmen. Older than Henry III, he had enough experience to guide him wisely, and he had the courage to point out the errors of the path he was treading. Passionately devoted to his master, violent and dictatorial, he always declared that he acknowledged only the Royal Person. He is said to have announced that he would be willing to turn his hand against the Duke if the King should wish it; and the Florentine ambassador swears that he applied libelous terms to the Queen of Navarre's morals.

Love affairs seemed to him only weaknesses and indiscretions. He blamed Margaret especially for her lack of loyalty to the King and for her boldness in fostering an alliance contrary to his interests. His first effort to break her power failed; he then conceived a new plan, a subtle one, matching woman against woman.

The reigning beauty of the day was Charlotte de Beaune-Semblançay, brilliant wife of an obscure Secretary of State, Monsieur de Sauves. Her delicate oval face, exquisite features, tender eyes, and tiny mouth gave her an attraction and sweetness no other great lady could boast. The Queen Mother liked to have this charming, tactful young woman in her household. She always had a following of ardent admirers whom she managed so gently that she drove none to despair. Margaret, who did not know how to play lightly with love, disliked her for her self-control, and fatal power over men. The King of Navarre and the Duke of Alençon both courted this famous coquette, but without any transports of passion. Le Gast apparently instructed Mme. de Sauves so thoroughly

that "in a short while neither my brother nor my husband had a thought in their heads but the courting of this woman." [1]

Le Gast then persuaded the King of Navarre that his wife was jealous and was supporting the Duke of Alençon. Margaret denies it hotly, says she gave him every sympathy and even tried to "divert" the Duke of Alençon. But so powerful were the charms of the enchantress that she succeeded in keeping both Princes at her side and took delight in estranging the King of Navarre from his wife.

Le Gast had all the success he could have hoped for. The King of Navarre, after quarrelling with his wife and the Duke, struck up a friendship with the Duke of Guise, and displayed such attentions to the King that the Queen Mother took offence.[2] Rivalry was so violent between the two lovers that they nearly came to blows. The King of Navarre described the situation in a letter to his cousin, Jean d'Albret: "This Court is the strangest you have ever seen. We are all almost always ready to cut each other's throats. We carry daggers, and often wear coats of mail or breastplates under our fine clothes. The King is in as much danger as I; he has more love for me than ever. My lords of Guise and Maine do not move without me. Never have I seemed stronger, but in this Court of loving friends I defy everyone. I am only waiting for the hour to come to give battle, for they say that they will kill me, and I wish to be the first to strike." [3]

All the great nobles had large bands of retainers, a survival of feudalism, who lived in their houses and formed active bodyguards. The Court was full of these young warriors, all headstrong and heart and soul committed to their masters' service. There were constant quarrels, usually settled at the

[1] Guessard, p. 52.
[2] Desjardins, vol. iv, p. 36.
[3] *Lettres missives*, vol. i, p. 81.

point of the sword, and duels became one of the chief amusements of the day. Great ladies had their favourites, and fought for the most skilful and fortunate in this game of death.

The King had attached to his service one of these brilliant swordsmen, Bussy d'Amboise, the bravest of the brave, a man of blood, touchy on all points of honour, and ever ready to leap to the defensive at a remark, a glance, the slightest disagreement. Typical of his age was this hothead, who also loved books and learning, and used to compose Greek verses for relaxation. Suddenly he left the King and joined the household of the Duke of Alençon. Margaret says casually, "My brother brought Bussy close to him, and gave him all the honour that his valour merited."[1] She adds, "In that age, he had no peer for courage, fame, grace, or wit." But she does not say how the change of allegiance was brought about, and the inference is that her own charms had something to do with it. She admits seeing Bussy very often. "He was always near my brother, and consequently much with me, for my brother and I were almost always together." Nothing more natural than this Platonic friendship.

But many people did not find it quite so innocent. Henry III tried to arouse Catherine to the same pitch of fury she had felt in similar circumstances at Lyons. But this time she replied with some asperity, "Bussy sees my daughter before you, before her husband, before all the gentlemen of the bedchamber, before the whole Court; there is nothing hidden or underhand about it."[2] There was much talk, however, and it was well known that a persistent lover could overcome any obstacles of convention. Although Henry III was genuinely concerned over anything that would stain the good repute of

[1] Guessard, p. 54. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

a daughter of France, his real grudge against Bussy was for his desertion. There was a crime he felt he had the right to punish and he set about it by indirect means.

One night when Bussy was leaving the Louvre to seek his own lodging in the rue de Grenelles, he was attacked by a dozen horsemen, "mounted on Spanish horses from the stables of a *most* distinguished person." In the confusion the torches were extinguished, and Bussy slipped into a near-by doorway, where he remained until the attacking party withdrew and he could go in safety to the house of Monsieur Drou, captain of the Duke of Alençon's Swiss Guards.

On the next day, as soon as he learned "from which quarter came the storm, he began to make all manner of threats; but later he was advised on good authority to be more prudent and seek a change of air." The entire household of the Duke of Alençon escorted him to the city gates.

Margaret's account of the affair is far more highly coloured. In her eyes, Bussy is the complete hero, brave beyond belief, who sacrifices his longing for revenge for the good of his master. And in the prejudiced misrepresentation of facts lies the involuntary confession of her love affair. She loved him for his cultivated learning, for his invincible courage, for his reckless lack of concern for human life, his own included; she was proud to feel that she could command this man who would yield to no one. In his turn, he worshipped her both as a woman and as his Queen. He was, perhaps, the ideal lover, for at every move he was courting danger or even death.

In 1599 or 1600, when Margaret was writing her *Mémoires,* she did not wish to remember that her husband had shared in the plot against Bussy. She throws the whole weight of her rage and indignation on Le Gast and Henry III, who were both by that time no longer in the land of the living.

Another incident served to increase her resentment. Her favourite lady-in-waiting was one Thorigny, and out of "pure malice" the King wanted to have her dismissed from Court. He finally prevailed on the King of Navarre to get rid of her. Margaret wept with anger, and felt the humiliation so keenly that she refused even to see her husband. The Florentine ambassador says that Thorigny had been the go-between in her mistress's affair[1] with Bussy, and that jealousy was the motive back of the King of Navarre's action.

At any rate, there was suspicion and ill feeling on all sides. Le Gast was supreme. Once again the discontented Princes decided to escape from Court, throw in their lots together, and demand proper treatment. Before he left, the Duke of Alençon tried to mend matters in the Navarre household. He begged Margaret to "forget all that had passed"; the King, her husband, he assured her, "suffered deep regret," and promised to love her and give her more happiness, "entreating her also to love him, and aid him in his affairs when he should be absent."

On the evening of the 15th of September, a little before the supper time of the King, the Duke left the Louvre, wrapped in a borrowed cloak "up to his eyes," and drove through the Saint-Honoré gate in the carriage of a great lady, probably the Duchess of Retz. About a quarter of a league farther on he met the horses which were awaiting him, and was soon joined by two or three hundred of his followers. He was free.[2]

Within the Louvre there was terrible confusion. The King flew into a temper and threatened to send out all the gentlemen of the Court with orders to bring back the rebel Duke, dead or alive. But he began to realize that being King was not enough to ensure obedience. During his one year on the

[1] Desjardins, vol. iv, p. 38. [2] Guessard, p. 64.

throne he had alienated a large part of the nobility by his extreme and ill-advised favouritism. Many lords and princes refused to pursue the King's brother, saying that they would be held criminally responsible "one day"; others waited until the morning. All over the kingdom, thousands of noblemen declared openly for the fugitive and prepared to join him.

Catherine sped to overtake the Duke and disarm him by concessions before the army Condé had raised in Germany could reach the frontier. So highly did she value Margaret's influence with her brother, that she begged her assistance in driving the bargain. The Duke demanded the immediate release of the imprisoned marshals, which she was forced to grant. Then began a long series of negotiations which finally resulted in a seven months' armistice, signed at Champigny on November 21st. The Duke of Alençon received as surety the counties of Angoulême, Niort, Saumur, Bourges and La Charité; Condé was given Mézières; freedom of worship was granted in all Protestant towns; and the German troops were paid five hundred pounds indemnity.

Margaret, too, had her revenge. Le Gast was pursued and murdered by partisans of the Duke of Alençon. Whether she had anything to do with the crime or not, Margaret expressed a fierce delight in the death of this enemy, killed so justly "while he was taking a cure, for his body was ravaged by all sorts of foulnesses, indeed like his mind, which he had given over to devils, magic, and all evil."

Her *Mémoires* are very sketchy for the events of the next few months. She says she spent the whole night of the Duke's escape in tears, and on the morrow had developed a cold, which kept her in bed "for several days, very ill and suffering much." During these days, she says that the King of Navarre was with her very little, for he spent all his time with Mme.

de Sauves, and adds, "He never spoke to me, as he had promised my brother to do, and he left without bidding me farewell."

She would have it believed that the King of Navarre fled a few days after the Duke of Alençon, and his neglect of her would not seem so extraordinary. As a matter of fact, he waited five months, until February, 1576, and during all that time ignored his wife completely. D'Aubigné writes of his resolve to put the Loire between him and his wife; Turenne speaks of their strained relations, and of the "many suspicions she had given him as to her conduct." The watch set over him became very slack, and he took advantage of it. Once out of Paris on the pretext of stag-hunting in the forest of Senlis, he slipped away from his companions and made for Vendôme. There, with some hesitation, he declared himself again a Huguenot.

It has been said that Catherine allowed him to escape because she believed that one more leader would increase the dissension in the Protestant party. But in this case she was mistaken. The King of Navarre retired to his own domain to look after his own affairs. Even at the age of twenty-two he showed uncanny powers of political prudence. Although he was the natural leader of the Protestant party, he harboured no special resentment against the Church. He had Catholics at his Court, in his councils, and in his armies. He stayed far in the south, away from the main theatre of war, and left to Condé and the Duke of Alençon the dangerous glory of open rebellion.

The civil war broke out on all sides. The Prince of Condé, in spite of the truce of Champigny, crossed the Meuse and laid waste the vineyards of Burgundy. The Duke of Alençon could not have stopped him even had he wished to do so; he

also denounced the armistice and took the field in person. The allied troops established themselves in Limagne, where they could give assistance to Damville and the Huguenots in Dauphiné. Henry III was once again taken completely unaware.

He accused his sister of the flight of the King of Navarre, "and if my mother had not stayed his hand," she says, "I do believe he would have wreaked his cruelty against my very life." He had her confined to her room so that she could hold communication with no one, and could neither follow nor warn her husband "of what was going on at Court." [1] So Margaret became a prisoner, deserted by all, even her "most private friends." At Court, she remarks philosophically, misfortune is always a solitary business, just as prosperity is assured of company; and persecution is the real touchstone of true and whole-hearted friends. Only the good Crillon, "scorning all risks and bans," came to see her five or six times, "astounding thereby so much the Cerberus" who guarded her door that "he dared not refuse him passage."

During this forced retirement she acquired her taste for literature, "that happy remedy" which she calls her "consolation for the trials that were reserved for her in the future." "I came upon those two fruits of sorrow and solitude in my first captivity, the joys of learning and devotion—blessings I had never tasted among the vanities and splendours of my fortunate days." [2]

But she was not entirely and solely occupied with God and her studies. Her husband wrote her "a very honest letter," in which he made excuses for having left without bidding her farewell, begged her to forget what had passed between them, and insisted that he wished to love her more than ever.

[1] Guessard, p. 67. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

Protestations came easily to this man, and he had the secret of making touching appeals. It was neither penitence nor renewed affection that made him turn back to his wife, once safely away from the fascinations of Mme. de Sauves, but quite simply good sense and calculation. Far away in the south-west, he needed some one who could tell him the news of the great world. Margaret would be the perfect person to keep him informed about the inclinations of the Court and the Duke of Alençon. So he asked her to advise him of "the general state of affairs," of her own situation and of her brother's. It was an order attached to a declaration of love. She hastened to obey him, and "aided by necessity, mother of invention," she managed to dispatch her letters. Prisoner though she was, she played her part of royal go-between.

In due course she was released. Catherine was trying to bring about a reconciliation between the brother and sister, and at the same time was urging Henry III to come to an understanding with his brother. She realized that he would never be capable of conducting or organizing a successful campaign, and she recommended peace as the only means of preventing still more costly defeats. Most unwillingly, the King, "beset," says Margaret, "in Gascony, Dauphiné, Languedoc, and Poitou by the King my husband, and the Huguenots, and in Champagne by my brother with a huge army composed of the bravest and hardiest nobility of France," listened to his mother's advice and charged her with making peace.

At first he would not allow her to take Margaret with her, for he wanted to keep her as "hostage." As Catherine had foreseen, the Duke refused to hear of any overtures "until the wrong done his sister should be righted and until he should see her happy and at liberty." The King finally yielded, but Margaret still bore him a grudge "in spite of his fine words."

She showed no resentment, "more through scorn than to give him any satisfaction," and agreed to go with Catherine to Champagne.

The negotiations took place in a nobleman's house at Etigny, a few miles from Sens. The Duke arrived with a detachment of troops and all the most distinguished gentlemen of his army, and accompanied by representatives of the German princes. Catherine refused to yield the government of Metz, Toul, and Verdun to the foreigners, but on all other points she was amenable.

The peace was signed on the 6th of May, 1576. The Duke of Alençon received for his personal estate Touraine, Berry, and Anjou, with the ducal title of the latter, and a revenue of two hundred thousand crowns. The Protestants obtained freedom of conscience and worship throughout the kingdom, indemnity for the victims of St. Bartholomew, and eight places of sanctuary. The foreign invaders were granted over three million florins. Henry III put his signature to these humiliating terms with tears in his eyes.

Catherine persuaded Margaret not to press her claim for an increased dowry following the precedent of the grants to the Duke of Alençon, and she hoped that this magnanimity would make a reconciliation easier. But one man stood between Margaret and the King. Henry III still feared her attachment to the Duke; it seemed to him a dangerous and criminal alliance. He made advances to her, offered her reparations, even went so far as to apologize for his behaviour; but the price he set on his friendship was always the same—a complete break with the rebel brother. She refused consistently, no matter what inducements he offered or what dangers he threatened. Their understandings were never more than

truces, always overshadowed by new suspicions. Margaret's loyalty would be very admirable if the whole security of the kingdom were not involved in her quarrel; indeed, the Duke of Alençon, in another way, was still more the evil genius of her life than Henry III.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE JOURNEY TO THE NETHERLANDS

THE King was so deeply mortified by the treaty of Etigny that he dismissed all the Councillors who had taken part in the negotiations and avoided his mother for two months.[1] He was naturally inclined to repudiate his promises, and public opinion seconded him. Catholic resentment reached such a pitch, says Margaret, that the partisans "came from every province and town to enroll themselves at Court, making a mighty uproar and wishing to elect my lords of Guise as their leaders."[2]

The King was ready enough to exploit their passions; it was, above all, imperative for him to break up the coalition between the Huguenots and the "politicians." And so he received his brother, the new Duke of Anjou, that enemy of yesterday, "with all honour, and even extended his welcome gladly to Bussy." He had no difficulty in persuading him that the best course for their future lay in "raising discord among the Huguenots rather than the Catholics."[3] The Queen Mother had the satisfaction of seeing her two sons so closely reunited that "there was in them but one desire for the preservation and greatness of this crown."[4]

In accordance with the terms of the treaty, the Estates-General met at Blois in December, 1576. But the Protestants, discouraged by the renewed friendship of the two brothers, took

[1] Guessard, p. 79.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 81.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 81-83.
[4] *Lettres*, vol. v, p. 223.

no part in the elections. Henry III relied on this entirely Catholic gathering to grant the funds necessary for carrying on the war. He took upon himself the rôle of adhering to the League, and "put his signature thereto as its chief." He also made his brother sign the agreement. The Queen Mother tried to counteract these measures by negotiating secretly with the Protestants; by making some tentative promises, she secured the coöperation of Damville.

Margaret had a great success at the formal opening of the meeting. "I saw, too," records Brantôme, "this our great Queen, dressed in a robe of orange and black, all bejewelled, with her long veil of state. Seated on her dais, she seemed so fair and beautiful that I heard more than three hundred persons of the assembly say that they were more enchanted by the sight of a beauty so divine than by the noble and dignified words of the King, although he spoke and discoursed with the finest eloquence." [1]

It was supposedly to prolong this pleasure that Henry III wished to keep her at court, far from her husband. She would have it believed that ever since his flight, eleven months earlier, she had longed to join him, and that he, too, was impatient to see her again. But Catherine implored her, with tears in her eyes, to stay at Court, since she had promised the King to keep her by her side. She would only have to wait until the Duke of Anjou should have returned.[2]

But when the two brothers had met at Blois, and the Vicomte de Duras had come from the King of Navarre "to fetch" her, the King postponed her going for the most flattering reasons. He dismissed Duras with excuses and promises; later he refused another ambassador, Génissac, more brusquely, saying that "he had given his sister to a Catholic,

[1] Brantôme, *Œuvres, ed. Lalanne, vol.* viii, p. 35. [2] Guessard, pp. 78-79.

not to a Huguenot, and that if the King of Navarre wished to have her, he should first become a Catholic."

Margaret went at once to her mother, whom she reproached for "abusing her with false promises." It was another occasion to remind her that she had not been married "for her own pleasure, nor by her own will," but by the "authority" of the King, Charles IX, and that, having been given the King of Navarre for husband, she should not be prevented from carrying out her "fortune." She threatened to escape and join him, even at peril of her life. The King replied that he could not dream of having his sister in the hands of heretics. "Who knows," he said, "that they might not avenge themselves on you for the punishment I shall accord them? No, indeed you shall not go." [1] He played out the little comedy of sentiment to the end, but his real reason for retaining Margaret was to keep her from reëstablishing the alliance between the King of Navarre and the Duke of Anjou.

Margaret, of course, was claiming her wifely rights merely as a matter of policy. It was perfectly obvious that she could, with no great heartache, resign herself to living far away from her husband. But her position was extremely precarious; her brothers were openly preparing his ruin. Her most intimate friends thought it would be "unsuitable" for her to remain at a Court so hostile to the King of Navarre during the progress of the war. They urged finding "some pretext to leave the kingdom, either for a pilgrimage or for a visit to some one of her relations." [2] Some advised her going to Lorraine or Savoy, to Saint-Claude in the Jura, a famous monastery, or to Notre-Dame de Lorette, the miraculous House of the Virgin. But events abroad changed the purpose and direction of her journey.

[1] Guessard, p. 83. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

The patriots in the Netherlands were appealing for help against the Spaniards. Neither the Duke of Alba nor his successor, Don Luis de Requesens, had succeeded in subduing the Seventeen Provinces. Those in the north, with a Calvinist population and a leader like William of Nassau, persisted most vigorously in the struggle. Their chief, in search of any support, sent an address to the Duke of Alençon, asking him to take the provinces "under his protection, as good and faithful vassals."[1] The dispatch was dated the same day as the peace of Etigny. The suppliants hoped, perhaps, that the combined Huguenot and Catholic armies would turn against Philip II. For a while the Duke, out of consideration for England, paid no attention to the proposals, although later he was to change his mind.

On the death of Requesens, the unpaid Spanish troops fell upon the towns and country districts, looting and killing. As a mark of indignation, the Estates of Brabant deposed the Council of State, which represented Philip II, at Brussels.

Immediately afterward, the sack of Antwerp by the garrison of the citadel, and the mutinies of Alost, stirred up such a tremendous wave of feeling that the Estates-General of all the Seventeen Provinces, forgetting their religious differences, drew up the famous agreement known as the Pacification of Ghent, November 8, 1576.[2] They demanded the withdrawal of all the Spanish troops, and although they assured the sovereign of their loyalty, they declared that they would regulate their political and religious affairs without his intervention. Temporarily, Catholic worship was suppressed in Holland and Zeeland, and the Reformed Church was banned in the rest of the Netherlands.

Philip II appointed a new Governor-General, his brother,

[1] Kervyn de Lettenhove, vol. iii, p. 52. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. iii, pp. 164-166.

Don John of Austria, a natural son of Charles V and a great military and naval hero. He crossed France in disguise, and stopped at Paris only for food and drink. Brantôme indeed reports, on the authority of "a little secretary," that Don John went incognito to the Louvre to catch a glimpse of that beauty more divine than human, the Queen of Navarre.[1] At any rate, he went straight to Luxembourg, the capital of his one loyal province, and there he opened negotiations with the Estates-General. In December, 1576, he agreed to an accord, and in February, 1577, he renewed his concessions. William of Nassau, meanwhile, withdrew to the north and continued to fortify Holland and Zeeland. At this time he was in direct communication with the Duke of Anjou. Mondoucet, the agent of the French Court, was so much in sympathy with the revolt that he would not go to meet Don John, and pleaded the excuse of "a very inferior travelling coach."[2] Henry III was obliged to recall this compromising diplomat, who nevertheless tried to convince the King that all the Flemish were deeply attached to France, and besought his aid.

The Duke of Anjou was ready to fill a place which his brother, on account of his crown, could not accept. He welcomed the advances of William of Nassau, offered his services to the Estates, and even criticized their wisdom in accepting any concessions from the Spanish Governor-General. While he was discussing the whole situation with Mondoucet, he had the inspiration of sending the Queen of Navarre on an unofficial mission to the Netherlands. The pretext could be a cure at the waters of Spa, a precaution against a second attack of erysipelas, and she could be accompanied by the Princess of La Roche-sur-Yon, who was really ill.

[1] Brantôme, vol. viii, p. 26; vol. ii, pp. 127-128.
[2] *Correspondence du Cardinal de Granvelle,* vol. vi, p. 507.

Neither Henry III nor Catherine was deceived by this story, but it suited their interests to let her go; it would keep her from writing too much news to the Duke of Anjou when he had taken the field, and it might serve as a means for forcing Philip II to yield some matrimonial concessions. There was no reason for delay. The King sent a courier to Don John to request the necessary passports for the Queen of Navarre to proceed through his territories to the waters of Spa.

Catherine had two things in mind: she wanted at all costs to keep her children from quarrels and the danger of civil war, and she also wanted to arrange a Spanish marriage for the Duke of Anjou. She was willing to supply funds to support the revolt, but it had to be done secretly so as not to draw down the displeasure of Spain. Both she and the King professed not to know the real reason back of the journey when Margaret set out in July, 1577.

The Estates-General had but just broken off with Don John and were casting about in all directions for support. The Duke, sure of the intentions of the Prince of Orange, had instructed his sister to test the Catholics of the south and gain adherents for him among the aristocracy, through whose lands she would have to pass on her way to Liège. All the investigations and propaganda were to be so secret that the English and the Spaniards should have not the faintest suspicion of them, and everything was to be done so discreetly that the French Court could always maintain the fiction of the cure. For the first time, Margaret now had a chance to serve this beloved brother in an affair worthy of her intelligence and devotion. She was to help in the gain of rich provinces and complete independence. It is easy to understand why she should dwell with pride on the events of this diplo-

matic campaign. And it is evidently the part of her *Mémoires* that she writes with greatest satisfaction.

Her train was very considerable for any ordinary journey. She took with her her chief lady-in-waiting, Mme. de Tournon, the Marquise de Mouy, Mme. la Castellane de Milan, Mlle. d'Atri, Mlle. de Tournon, and seven or eight other young ladies; the Bishop of Auxerre, Charles d'Escars, M. de Mouy, and several of her gentlemen in attendance.[1] "This company," says she, "gave so much pleasure to the foreigners who saw it and found it so neatly equipped, that they held France in all the greater admiration." [2]

She describes it with the satisfaction of a gratified vanity. Her litter was made "with four pillars covered in crimson Spanish velvet, broidered in gold and shaded silks. It was glazed as well, and each window pane bore a device painted on the glass, all about the sun and his effects, and the words were in Spanish or Italian." The Princess of La Roche-sur-Yon and Mme. de Tournon also travelled in litters; then came ten ladies on horseback, followed by six coaches which carried the rest of the suite.

In all the towns of Picardy through which she passed, the Governors had the King's order to receive her "with the honour due her rank," and they paid her all the homage even she could have hoped for. She left Paris on the 6th of July, and reached the frontier on the 14th.

Once out of France, Margaret had a brilliant success. At Cambrai, an archbishopric under the protection of the King of Spain, she was welcomed with the honours due a daughter of France by the archbishop, Louis de Berlaymont. The prelate felt obliged to give a state ball; he would not attend it himself, being "of the stiff, ceremonious Spanish disposition"

[1] Guessard, pp. 89-90. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

—thus Margaret describes his austerity—but he left her in the company of Monsieur d'Inchy.

This nobleman was the nephew of the Comte d'Egmont, a victim of the Duke of Alba, and the year before he had occupied the citadel of Cambrai in the name of the Estates and had foiled Don John. It was a very rash move on the part of the Spanish bishop to leave this opponent of his government in familiar conversation with the beautiful French princess. "Monsieur d'Inchy," says Margaret, "in elegance, fine qualities, and grace, could learn nothing from our most perfect courtiers, having none of that clumsiness which seems natural to the Flemish." His control of the citadel made him all the more attractive. And so she used all the wit God gave her, to say nothing of other methods of persuasion, to make him "lovingly disposed towards France, and especially towards my brother." So intoxicating did he find her conversation and her charms, that he decided to accompany her to Namur, where Don John was awaiting her, and during the ten days' journey he protested over and over again that his heart was "all French." [1] Before they parted, Margaret extracted a half promise to surrender the citadel to the Duke of Anjou, and was well pleased.

In Hainaut she made more conquests. The chief bailiff, Philip de Lalain, met her and escorted her to Valenciennes, where he *fêted* her throughout the day. Then he took her to Mons, where his sister-in-law, Mme. de Havré, received her "not like a foreign princess," but as if she had been her "sovereign lady." Comte de Lalain boasted a connection with the Bourbons, and had good reason to hate the Spanish rule. His wife also had very strong feelings about it. They talked very frankly with the Queen of Navarre, and urged the inter-

[1] Guessard, p. 91.

vention of the King of France. Margaret made graceful excuses for Henry III, a peace-loving Prince, much occupied by the Huguenots in his own kingdom. But she said that the Duke of Anjou "would lend willing ear to this enterprise." And she went on to extol his courage, virtue, and prowess in arms. The Netherlands could nowhere find a better or more influential prince to help them. If the Comte de Lalain would establish himself, he could be sure of any reward he might care to name. In all her dealings she did not hesitate to exaggerate the good qualities and resources of the Duke, engaging on his behalf the manhood and finances of the kingdom, just as if she were sure of Henry III.

Don John had preceded her to Namur, where he was planning to welcome the daughter of France in state. He rode out to meet her, accompanied by the gentlemen of his suite. He dismounted to greet her in her litter, and rode by her side all the rest of the journey. The entry into Namur took place on a very dark night, but "all had been arranged so well, and the town was so brilliantly lighted from every window and shop, that a new day seemed to be shining." [1]

Her apartment was furnished with "the most beautiful, rich, and magnificent pieces" she had ever seen, and hung with draperies of velvet and satin, the bed and curtains representing "the glorious victory he had won over the Turks." [2]

On the next day he took his guests to hear "mass in the Spanish manner, with music, violins, and cornets." At the state dinner he and Margaret sat alone at a raised table, and as a son of Charles V he had the honour of being served with wine by Ludovic Gonzaga on bended knee. After dinner there was a ball, which lasted all afternoon. Don John kept close to the Queen, talking to her all the time and assuring

[1] Guessard, p. 103.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.

her many times that she reminded him of her sister, Elizabeth of Valois, "the Queen, his lady," of whom he had been very fond. The next day, he took her out in a boat to a musical supper on an island in the Meuse, and the following morning he escorted her to the boat which was to take her to Liège, and bade her "a courteous and honourable farewell."

She never guessed that under all these attentions he was planning to seize the citadel and eject the forces of the Estates. Margaret always practised her diplomacy as if it were a Court game, to be carried on in the midst of entertainments. At Liège she abandoned it completely and set out to enjoy herself.

She drank the waters that were brought to her from Spa, "a little village of three or four mean hovels." Liège was a large, fine city; the Prince Bishop was agreeable in person, a great aristocrat, and a fluent French scholar; the canons proved charming companions. Many lords and ladies from Germany came especially to see her. She had quite a little court, and every day was full of parties and diversions. She forgot her mission and her sorrows. The Prince Bishop kept her so well amused that she had no suspicions of all that was going on around her in the Netherlands.

It was only at the end of her stay that she learned that Don John had captured the citadel of Namur the very day she left the town, and that the whole country was up in arms. At the same time, she received a letter from the Duke of Anjou. She had left him high in the royal favour, in command of an army, lustily fighting the Huguenots. He had taken La Charité and later Issoire. But just one month after this last feat the King had recalled him, saying that he wanted his aid in council. In reality, it was a case of jealousy and suspicion. He wrote to his sister that he found the Court "greatly changed" in his direction. He was held in as slight regard

as if he had done nothing in the King's service. Bussy was persecuted as in the time of Le Gast. Every day "indignities" were put upon them.

The warning of her brother, coming at the same time as the resumption of hostilities near at hand, frightened Margaret out of her wits. She decided upon an immediate departure. She was deaf to all reasoning; she mistrusted her own people. She feared that everyone was plotting to turn her over to her enemies. The Prince Bishop agreed to lend her his chief bailiff for her protection.

The return voyage was fertile in incidents, which might have served as timely warnings had she not been so full of prejudices. She passed through the Walloon country, where the people, naturally excitable, were wrought to a pitch of hatred and horror of everything Spanish. Her memory of these towns is of violent anarchy, of mechanical figures and drunkenness. Her account is a caricature, lively and picturesque enough, of middle-class life. Her entire faith was in the aristocracy; she could not believe that angry mobs could have any political importance.

At Huy, her first halting-place, the people no longer acknowledged the sovereignty of the Prince Bishop of Liège, because he was neutral and they were in favour of the Estates. When they heard that his chief bailiff was part of the company, they sounded the tocsin, turned artillery on the house in which Margaret was lodged, and would not let her out until morning, "after a night of agonies." Even then she was forced to pick her way between two rows of armed men, all behaving "like madmen."[1]

She reached Dinan that evening and found the place in an uproar. The townsfolk had just elected their burgomasters,

[1] Guessard, p. 119.

and "every man was drunk." To make the situation even worse, the Bishop of Liège had once made war on them and was held as their natural enemy. When they saw the imposing cavalcade approaching the outskirts, they "rushed to arm themselves and closed the gates." Several gentlemen were sent ahead to explain their mission, but they could not be heard in all the confusion.

Margaret stood up in her litter, removed her mask, and after some difficulty succeeded in gaining a hearing. She told them who she was and the purpose of her journey. She then begged to be allowed to come into the town just for the night. The people consented, but when they caught sight of the chief bailiff, they began to shower curses on "this good fellow, a venerable old man of eighty years, with a white beard down to his waist," and riddled the walls of the house with shot. She forced her host, by dint of entreaties, to go to the window and ask the "most responsible" of the roisterers to come speak to her. After much shouting and confusion, the burgomasters arrived on the scene, "so heavily drunk that they knew not what they were saying." She assured them that she had not known that the chief bailiff was their enemy, and she pointed out "what a serious matter it was to offend a person of her rank who was the friend of the greatest lords in the Estates, and that Comte de Lalain and all the other noblemen would be much displeased at this reception."

At the name of the Comte de Lalain "a change came over them, and they showed more respect than at the names of all the kings which she had mentioned hitherto." The oldest of the group asked her, "smiling and hesitating," if she really was a friend of my lord the Comte de Lalain, and when she replied that indeed she was, and a relative of his as well, they one and all made obeisance before her, kissed her hand, and

promised to allow the good worthy bailiff to depart with her safe and sound.[1]

The next evening, she arrived before the fortress of Fleurines, and the whole company went into the lower court, which they found open and deserted. The lady of the house took fright at the sight of so many strangers, and retired to the donjon, refusing to listen to any explanation. A little later there appeared "on a little slope, barely three thousand paces away," a band of three hundred foot soldiers sent by Don John to bar her passage. They halted at their point of vantage, "counting on taking her prisoner the following morning."

Happily for Margaret, the Lord of Fleurines arrived during the night, with orders from Lalain to escort her safely as far as France.[2]

At Câteau-Cambrésis she was seized with a new terror. She heard that some Huguenot troops had planned to attack her on the frontier, and, without heeding any advice, she left her litter, took to horse, and pressed on to Châtelet, which she reached about ten o'clock in the morning, "having solely by the grace of God escaped all the ambushes and traps" of her enemies.[3] Her next stop was at La Fère-sur-Oise, a town of which the King of Navarre had made her châtelaine. There a courier awaited her with a letter from the Duke of Anjou, who complained bitterly of the treatment he was receiving and informed her that the King had signed a new treaty with the Protestants at Bergerac. He was waiting, "all impatience," for her to come back; he would fly to La Fère to meet her. As soon as he heard of her coming, he sent Bussy and all his household to Angers, and he himself, with only fifteen or twenty of his people, sped post-haste to join her.

They spent two happy months together, amusing themselves

[1] Guessard, p. 122. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 126. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

and nourishing their mutual hatred of Henry III. The Duke of Anjou was indignant that his brother should have been opposed to his activities in the Netherlands. The King had flattered him with false hopes, and had been only too glad to forget his vague promises after the peace of Bergerac. But he still believed that he could overcome the royal resistance, and he received various emissaries from the Estates, who came to offer him assurances of their good will.

Henry III came back to Paris on All-Hallows Eve, and granted an audience to the Flemish diplomats, but rejected the idea of active intervention. He committed himself only to a promise that he would entreat the King of Spain to concede peace to his subjects in the Netherlands.[1] No definite arrangement could be made even with the Duke of Anjou. The Estates implored his assistance, but they would offer nothing in exchange. His own convictions wavered. Whenever he saw any prospect of marriage with the Infanta, his enthusiasm for the campaign was immediately cooled. The Estates finally sought help, at a terrible price, from Elizabeth of England and the German Princes, but their combined army was defeated at Gembloux on the 31st of January, 1578.

In the meantime, Margaret was making the return journey from La Fère to Paris, where she was welcomed more warmly than she would have believed possible. "The King, the two Queens, and all the Court," she says, "did me the honour of coming to meet me as far as Saint-Denis . . . where they received me with much affection and good cheer, being pleased to bid me tell them of the honours and splendours of my journey, of my sojourn at Liège, and of the adventures of my return."[2] Perhaps the King thought that a little attention

[1] Kervyn de Lettenhove, vol. iv, p. 524. [2] Guessard, p. 129.

and flattery would regain his sister's love and her influence over his brother.

But the Duke had no sooner abandoned the Flemish project than he suddenly threw his whole heart into it once more. Margaret had no wish to stay at Court if he was to be far away. On the very day of her triumphant return she begged the King and the Queen Mother to allow her to rejoin her husband. They both approved, and the King even offered to alter the terms of her marriage contract and increase the amount of her dowry. He did not, however, encourage her immediate departure, for he did not know what intrigues she might be planning, and he was in grave doubt about the wisdom of pursuing the war in the Netherlands. Jealous though he was of his brother's prestige, he had other reasons for not wishing to become too deeply embroiled.

The English Court had signified its objection to any French conquests. Henry III was also uncertain of the "device" conceived by his brother of diverting to foreign fields the forces that were tearing the country to pieces. The Huguenots would not go to fight beyond the frontiers without some thought of their own advantage. They were already ill satisfied with the peace of Bergerac, and if they should serve in a victorious campaign, they would feel they could dictate what terms they pleased. The Catholics as a whole were opposed to the expedition, and their sympathies were more with Philip II. For the sake of getting rid of a few troublesome Huguenots, he would have to risk estranging the mass of his subjects, and might even jeopardize the peace and prosperity of his kingdom. Margaret's account of his hesitation, prejudiced and biassed as it is, leaves no doubt that in this case, at least, he was following a wise course.

Le Gast was succeeded in the King's favour by a throng of

very young men, handsome dandies, "curled and befrizzed, decked out like peacocks and painted like women"—the *mignons,* they were called by the common people. Bussy naturally scorned these effeminate creatures, fantastically brave in duels but poor specimens of fighting-men, and took no pains to hide his feelings. He ridiculed them publicly, and flaunted his insolence.

Small wonder that some revenge was planned. On the 1st of February three of the gilded youths attacked Bussy outside the Saint-Honoré gate when he was returning to town with a single companion. The pair put up a good fight, but were forced to flee for their lives. The King refused to have his favourites arrested, and dismissed the case.

Margaret, of course, pretends that the dispute was a trap set for the Duke of Anjou in the hope that "he might rush in headlong." [1] She forgets that Bussy had provoked the trouble by insulting and libelling the gallants, and that his presence at Court was a constant irritation. The Queen Mother, making every effort to keep her sons on good terms, persuaded the Duke to send Bussy away, and let him think that such a move would probably melt the King's opposition to the Flemish expedition.

After Bussy had departed, to no great distance, one must admit, the *mignons* took to plaguing his master so openly that "all the world remarked it." The Duke, "ever prudent and patient," or, as others would have it, a rascal and a coward, bore all the affronts "to further his own schemes, hoping in this wise to be able to leave the kingdom shortly and never set foot in it as a subject again."

He and his mother came closer together at this time, for she too resented the extravagant presumption of the younger

[1] Guessard, pp. 131-132.

men. He sought her out and told her all his troubles and hopes. She was deeply touched and reassured by his affection. Yes, he told her, he had long thought of flight, but he was now resigned, and all he hoped for was the King's consent to his Flemish campaign.

While he was disarming her suspicions he was actually planning to escape. He had reached the decision much earlier, and a final humiliation merely hastened the date.

He had made up his mind not to attend the marriage of one of the favourites on February 9th, and to please him Margaret also stayed away. To cover up this double rudeness, the Queen Mother went to dine with her two children and persuaded the Duke to come to the ball which the King was giving the following evening. When the *mignons* caught sight of him they began to jeer at him unmercifully for his late appearance, "at the hour of darkness, because darkness suited well anyone so short and ugly." He withdrew, "full of indignation and fury beyond control," and told his mother that he was going away for some days for hunting, "thinking that his absence would cool their hatred" and that the King would be in a more acquiescent state of mind.[1]

On his return he covertly passed through Saint-Germain, where Bussy, who by "merest chance happened to be there," quietly joined his suite again. Of the subsequent events that took place in the Louvre, Margaret's is the only complete account, and it is more a plea in the Duke's favour than a straightforward narrative.

At first Henry III had granted his brother leave to go, but later on his favourites had so aroused his suspicions of this alleged passion for hunting that he suddenly decided to arrest the Duke and all his followers. Greatly upset, he went and

[1] Guessard, pp. 134-135.

reproached his mother for having allowed him to go on what was probably a "dangerous enterprise." Catherine, fearing that "in such an excited state he might do some wrong to his brother's life," snatched up her "night-cloak" and followed him.

The King strode into his brother's apartment and told the captain of the guard and the Scottish archers to search all the chests where he was certain "of finding things of grave importance." He himself ransacked the bed and snatched from the Duke's hand a letter. In spite of earnest entreaties, he opened it in his mother's presence—to find it nothing more than a billet-doux from Mme. de Sauves. He posted the Scottish archers in the room with orders not to let the prisoner speak to anyone; but curiously enough, he allowed Margaret to share his captivity. This amounted to letting the chief conspirator plan his defence with his most competent adviser; but the whole affair was strange.

The two prisoners, well aware of sympathy all around them, recovered their self-assurance and sent word to the King, requesting some explanation of their "detention." The Queen Mother was genuinely worried by the situation. She sent for the members of the Council, the Chancellor, the leading princes and the marshals of France, and on their advice and in their company she pointed out to the King the dangerous wrong he was committing. He gave in suddenly, told his mother to restore a general peace, and withdrew the guards.

Catherine, who understood so well his pride, would have wished that the reconciliation could have been carried out quite quietly, but the Duke and Margaret insisted upon a public apology. Even to this he agreed. In the presence of the whole Court he begged his brother to forgive him measures which a mistaken zeal for the good of the state had led

him to adopt. The Duke replied that he would bear no ill feeling and would be satisfied if the King would but recognize his innocence. "Whereupon, the Queen my mother took them both and made them embrace each other."

The quarrel between Bussy and the *mignons* was also to be patched up. He came into the room, says Margaret, "with that fine manner that is natural to him," and when the King bade him embrace his former enemy he replied: "No more than that, Sire? If it please you that I kiss him, so I will." Suiting his action to his words, he seized the young man and gave him the hearty hug of a Pantaloon, "whereat all the company, though greatly amazed, could not contain their laughter." [1]

There was still trouble in the air. Henry III saw with his own eyes that the Duke would welcome the first opportunity to escape, and he feared another civil war as in 1575. He gave orders to his guards to watch all doors and to prevent his brother's leaving the Louvre. This insult was the last straw for the Duke of Anjou.

Margaret decided to help him, "seeing that it was for his safety, that neither the King nor the state would suffer thereby." As a matter of fact, the security of the realm was the least consideration in her mind. The gates of the Louvre were so strongly guarded that the only way the prisoner could escape was through the window in his sister's room, which was on the second floor and overlooked the moat. To obtain a "strong and goodly rope of the required length," Margaret had the idea of sending to town a broken bed-trunk [2] "as if to be repaired," which would be brought back with the rope inside it.

[1] Guessard, pp. 146-147.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 150, a large trunk meant to hold bedding, quilts, etc.

All arrangements were made for one night, when the prisoner nearly betrayed the whole scheme by too much precaution. At supper, he whispered to Margaret some last word of advice, and Matignon, the Lieutenant-General of Lower Normandy, guessed the meaning of the words, though he could not hear them. He had no love for the Duke, and he went to warn Catherine that he was sure the escape would take place that night.

Margaret found herself very perplexed in her interview with her mother, who questioned her closely about this plot. She did not wish to betray her brother, nor yet swear against the truth, "a thing I would not do to avoid a thousand deaths!" [1] But thanks to divine Providence, she was able to control so well her features and her words, that she gave no hint to her mother of anything save what suited her, and this she accomplished without a lie.

When the rope had been let down, the Duke of Anjou climbed down first, "laughing and chattering, without any fright, although it was at a great height." Simier followed him, pale and trembling, and after him went the servant, Cangé. The three men were to make for the left bank of the river, near the Abbey of Sainte-Geneviève, where Bussy planned to meet them. While Cangé was sliding down the rope, a man appeared by the side of the moat, and ran off to the tennis court, which adjoined the guard-room. Margaret, thinking only of her brother's danger, stood "half swooning with fear, and filled with a despair which none can know who have not attempted like deeds." [2]

Her women drew in the rope, but they bundled it into the fire with so much haste that the chimney went up in a blaze. The archers of the guard, seeing the flames, rushed up and

[1] Guessard, p. 158. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 151.

beat upon the door. Margaret had recovered her wits. Sure as she was that her brother had been taken and that they were both ruined, she did not cease to hope in the goodness of God; to gain time, she sent an answer to the archers through her women that she was asleep, that the fire was nothing, and that they must make no more noise.

Two hours later the King, by now informed of the flight, sent for her and received her "with such wrath that he would have vented it all upon me, had not the presence of my mother restrained him." But she was not disturbed, for she knew that the fugitives were far away. She did not scruple to say that it had all been done without her knowledge, and that she would give her life as surety that this departure would mean no danger to the King's service, for she could swear that her brother had gone away only to prepare his expedition into the Netherlands. Her words reassured the King somewhat, and he gave her leave to return to her chamber. A few days later he received letters from the Duke, professing obedience. "They checked his complaining," says Margaret, "but they could not do away with his displeasure." [1]

She sums up the long period from February to August, 1578, in a phrase which indicates the temper of the King's sentiments. He gave appearance of supporting the Flemish enterprise, "but truly, he crossed underhandedly the preparations of this army." [2]

[1] Guessard, p. 155.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 155.

CHAPTER SIX

RESTORING PEACE IN THE SOUTH

AFTER the flight of the Duke of Anjou, Margaret felt more keenly than ever the falseness of her position. Here at the French Court she was far away from the King, her husband, whom she loved but little, and inconveniently near the King, her brother, whom she loved not at all. She had lost her only consolation, the presence of the one person of whom she really was fond. Undoubtedly she was also beginning to want to be Queen of Navarre in real earnest.

Catherine was entirely ready to satisfy her wish. Neither by promises nor by arguments had she been able to dissuade her youngest son from his dream of conquering the Netherlands; she was afraid that if she used force he would yield to the temptation of stirring up the discontented elements of both religions in open revolt. On the whole, she preferred to run the possible risk of a foreign war than the all too certain danger of civil strife. But she hoped to avoid both pitfalls. Surely the best protection against Spanish reprisals would be the union of all the King's subjects, including the Protestants of the south. And here Margaret could be extremely useful.

Ever since the treaty of Bergerac, the Huguenots had been very restive; they refused to give up their fortified strongholds, and their resistance was perfectly apparent. If the Duke of Anjou was determined to invade the Netherlands, some measures would have to be taken, at any cost, to keep the south

from stirring. Catherine offered to go and negotiate an arrangement with the Protestant Churches, but on condition that she be allowed to take Margaret with her. Shrewd diplomat that she was, she was afraid that the King of Navarre would listen to no advances until he had regained his Queen. That one excuse for temporizing could easily be removed. There was also the possibility that the King, anxious enough to see his wife while Henry III kept her a hostage, might now receive her with some coolness. Margaret set to work to win a cordial welcome from this husband who had fled from the Louvre two and a half years before without a word of farewell, and who showed his devotion only when he had need of information. She hoped to make him believe that she had been longing to rejoin him for many months.

"Your sister," wrote Catherine to Henry III on the 6th of May, 1578, "bore herself in such wise towards my Lord of Moisens [Henri d'Albret] that when he came into the presence of my son, the King of Navarre, he assured him of her great desire to come to him again. He then showed all eagerness to see her, and swore his intention of loving her perfectly and giving her all kindness in the world."[1]

The King was completely reconciled to letting his sister go. He spared himself no pains to soften her heart, increasing her dowry and giving her title to extensive lands from his own domain. In addition to the income "such as the daughters of France are wont to receive," he gave her a further allowance "from the moneys in his coffers." It was certainly a generous reparation. He redoubled his advances, "taking the trouble," says Margaret, "to come to see me every morning, telling me how very profitable his friendship would be to me, while that of the Duke of Anjou would bring about my ruin." But he

[1] *Lettres*, vol. vi, p. 15.

could not "shake the loyalty" she had vowed to her youngest brother.[1] When she went to take leave of him at Ollainville, the past seemed forgotten, and all disagreements, save the one, dismissed from their minds.

Margaret's household was much more magnificently appointed than at the time of her marriage. It now comprised thirty-five ladies and maidens of noble houses, twelve women of the bedchamber, seven stewards, eight butlers, four cupbearers, three carvers, and five grooms of the stable. Five almoners, two chaplains, two clerks of the chapel, five doctors, an apothecary, and a surgeon were to watch over the service of her body and soul. The household staff was also very much increased. The control of the royal household was divided between the Controller of Finance and the Treasurer-General. A council of eight councillors, four secretaries, and seventeen clerks were to help the Queen deal with her business affairs and manage the estates which composed the new settlement of her dowry.

All this company of about three hundred persons, including all manner of servants and artisans, were intended to act as her escort on the journey, and to enhance her royal dignity. Catherine took with her only her favourite ladies-in-waiting and maids of honour, La Verne, Dayelle the Spanish beauty, the bewitching Charlotte de Sauves, and a few others. In all, she said, "twenty coifs,"[2] but worth many trained soldiers. This was the famous flying squadron with which she was wont to subdue even the most refractory of party leaders. But there were also older women in the company, and an imposing suite of diplomats and gentlemen.

The strict Protestants eyed with alarm the arrival of the two Queens and all their train of beguiling women and prac-

[1] Guessard, p. 156. [2] Mariéjol, *Catherine de' Medicis*, p. 297.

tised statesmen. They suspected Catherine of another design than the reconciliation of a husband and wife and the affirmation of a treaty of peace. Did she not have with her all the Catholic Bourbons, as if to set an example to the King of Navarre, who persisted in heresy? Indeed, she may have had some idea of leading back to the Catholic fold this son-in-law, whom she had once converted by force of arms. Henry of Navarre's beliefs seemed very unstable; he had Catholics in his army, and his freedom of manners and speech had scandalized the good ministers. Even if he became only a nominal Catholic, the French Court would be satisfied and the Protestant cause would suffer a death-blow. The prospective meeting was fraught with anxiety.

Meanwhile, the two Queens were drawing near. They left Ollainville on the 8th of August, and on the 18th of September reached Bordeaux, where they made a long halt.

The King of Navarre had remembered the proclamation of the States of Béarn against the validity of his marriage with a Catholic, and he insisted that a second ceremony should be performed according to the rites of the Reformed Church. Catherine believed that the reconciliation between husband and wife was the best prelude to peace negotiations. She wanted Margaret to be universally recognized as the Queen of Navarre, and she insisted on her making state entries into all the towns of Guyenne. In all the ceremonies, she was preparing her final rôle and hoping to make an impression on her husband through his Gascon subjects.

She was now in her twenty-sixth year, in the finest perfection of her beauty. Brantôme says, "Whether she would display her gentleness or her dignity, her countenance is dazzling to all who gaze thereon, so fair are her features, so delicate their outlines, and her eyes are so clear and delightful that one

is speechless before them. And moreover, these charms are allied to a most beautiful body, and her bearing is of so brave a dignity that one would deem her ever to be rather a goddess from heaven than a princess upon earth."[1] She was so assured of her beauty that, contrary to the habit of the day, she frequently dispensed with a mask. Although blond wigs were the fashion, she also liked to display her natural dark hair, waving lightly back from her forehead, brightened by the sunshine and curling in the breezes.

She had the reputation of being the most magnificently dressed woman in France, the most exquisite in her person, the cleverest in designing the fashions of her costumes, without peer for elegance and taste. "This radiant Queen," continues Brantôme, "no matter in what manner she might array herself, whether as a French lady in her hood, whether in simple coif, Court veil, or bonnet, was ever so lovely that one knew not which style became her most. To each would she add some new device all her own, and in no wise possible of imitation."[2]

On the day of her state entry into Bordeaux she appeared "in triumph, the fairest and most gifted Queen in the world." When she disembarked on the Quay des Chartrons, she was greeted by the Archbishop, Antoine Prévost de Sansac, by Marshal de Biron, and by the Chief President of the Parliament. To all three she answered "with eloquence, wisdom, and readiness, and with such grace and majesty" that they declared she even surpassed Jeanne d'Albret and Queen Margaret of Angoulême, "two mouths of gold and the most smooth-spoken in France."

Catherine kept in the background. She wanted the report of these successes in speech, beauty, and adornment to reach

[1] Brantôme, vol. viii, pp. 24 and 26. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. viii, p. 36.

the ears of the King of Navarre. Her advice to her daughter might indeed have been an echo of the speech in "Love's Labour's Lost," when another princess was sent to win a King of Navarre:

> Now, madam, summon up your dearest spirits;
> Consider who the king your father sends;
> To whom he sends; and what's his embassy:
> Yourself, held precious in the world's esteem,
> To parley with the sole inheritor
> Of all perfections that a man may owe,
> Matchless Navarre . . . .
> Be now as prodigal of all dear grace,
> As nature was in making graces dear,
> When she did starve the general world beside,
> And prodigally gave them all to you.[1]

Margaret had no need of encouragement. She dearly wanted to seem more beautiful and desirable than ever to this husband who apparently hardly remembered her. She made ready for the meeting as if for a contest, with a royal heart as prize. Louise de Clermont, the old and delightfully intimate friend of all the Valois, wrote to the King, and laughingly described his sister's elaborate preparations. "For three days she has kept herself shut up with three women in attendance; she spends her time in the bath, white as a lily, smelling of sweet lotions. One might say it was a sorceress with all her charms."[2] Margaret would not admit that she was bathed, rubbed, and perfumed, that she had her hair curled and her eyebrows plucked only to seduce her husband. When her most intimate friends asked her for whose sake she was taking so much trouble, she replied that "it was to please no one but only herself."

[1] Shakespeare, "Love's Labour's Lost," act ii, sc. i.

[2] *Bulletin Annuaire de la Société de l'Histoire de France, années* 1851-1852, pp. 343-344.

The first meeting took place early in October in a lonely house called Casteras, on the road between Saint-Macaire and La Réole. The King of Navarre greeted this fine Court "with very good grace and with appearance of very great affection and delight." He had brought with him a large company of gentlemen, among whom was the Vicomte de Turenne, one of his most brilliant officers. The King entered the royal chariot and drove with the Queens as far as La Réole.[1]

Catherine, with her passion for playing politics, tried immediately to bring about a reconciliation between the King of Navarre and Marshal de Biron. The interview came near having a disastrous ending, for both men had very bitter feelings towards each other, but Margaret's intervention, good sense, and charm saved the day. They agreed after a fashion to bear no further malice, and Catherine had to be satisfied.

It is strange that after a meeting which seems to have been a happy one, Margaret should not have gone with him to one of her towns like Agen, or to one of his, like Nérac. But the situation in the south was still such that he could not enter a Catholic town, and she would have been a prisoner among the Huguenot troops of Nérac. The best course was to wait until some general peace could be established.

The two Courts continued on their journey, travelling sometimes together, sometimes separately. Catherine and her daughter went to Agen, one of the towns of Margaret's dowry, where she was received in state. The Queen Mother took advantage of the occasion to summon all the Catholic noblemen of the countryside and harangue them on behalf of Henry III. Then they left for Toulouse, where they were to meet the Governor of Languedoc. The King of Navarre had left them at Marmande on the 9th of October; he saw them again

[1] *Lettres*, vol. vi, p. 47.

on the 11th and on the 15th. Except for their long stay at Toulouse, an ultra-Catholic city, where he could not prudently join them, he was never very far away.

At all their meetings he declared himself ready to come to agreement, but there were others who had no wish for peace. So deep was the mistrust that the Catholics would not have a Protestant town, nor the Protestants a Catholic one, for the seat of the forthcoming conference. Turenne finally made them agree to Nérac, the capital of the Duchy of Albret. Catherine and Margaret proceeded to Auch, where they planned to remain until the arrival of the Church delegates.

The King of Navarre, now unsparing in his attentions, visited them again and again. He would invite himself for dinner and stay for the night. He joined them at Auch, and made a state entry into this capital of his county of Armagnac, where two years before the town councillors had barred the gates to him. This time they offered him the keys of the city, with humble apologies. Catherine had tactfully retired with Marshal de Biron to a "dovecote," so as to leave the stage clear for the young people.

Turenne says, "We found the Queen and all her maids of honour. The King of Navarre and the said Queen greeted each other and showed themselves more ready for understanding than on the other occasions when they had met. The violins came up. We all began to dance." With politics forgotten, Margaret's charm began to take effect.

Unfortunately, a messenger suddenly appeared to tell the King of Navarre that the Catholics had seized La Réole. It was only an uprising of the citizens against Captain Favas, a Huguenot, who governed them brutally. But the King thought it was a plot organized by de Biron. He slipped away with Turenne and took possession of Fleurance to hold as

a challenge. Catherine was greatly "upset" by this mischance. She sent de Biron to La Réole, where he easily restored order, and it was finally decided that the town should remain under Huguenot control, but that it should have a new governor.

As soon as this matter was settled, the King of Navarre set out to meet the Queen Mother at Jegun to discuss the conference. But on a sudden impulse he sent her word "that he wished to play the part of a good husband and go to see his wife." He immediately mounted horse and rode full speed to Auch. Some days later he again visited her, with flattering conjugal attention.

He went on ahead to Nérac so as to be on hand to welcome Margaret when she made her state entry on the 15th of December. The greatest poet of the Protestant south had prepared an ode in her honour in which three nymphs, Latin, French, and Gascon, strove for the honour of paying homage to the wife of the King of Navarre, the sister of the King of France, and the pearl of learned princesses. The Gascon nymph, suitably enough, was granted preference for reasons she proclaimed in her language:

Iou soun nympho Gascoue: ere es Gascoue;
Soun marit es Gascoun, e sous sutgets gascous.[1]
(I am a nymph of Gascony: now Gascon too is she;
Her husband is a Gascon tall; and Gascon are his subjects all.)

The King of Navarre entertained his guests lavishly, getting the Governor to send him from Eauze all the game that could be secured, and in addition a tun of Graves wine, eleven pipes of white wine and claret, partridges, quail, thrushes, peaches, pears, and other fruits. "He has done the very utmost," wrote Catherine, "for us and for our followers to give us honourable welcome and good cheer."[2]

[1] Du Bartas, p. 156.

[2] *Lettres*, vol. vi, p. 173.

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When Christmas drew near, Margaret and Catherine left the Huguenot city and retired to Port-Sainte-Marie, a holding of the King of France, to perform their devotions. There they remained for the whole month of January, for the conference was again postponed. Margaret, however, went frequently to Nérac, and Henry visited her at Port-Sainte-Marie. Experience was convincing him that his intelligent young wife was the natural protector of their common interests and the perfect go-between in all his difficulties with the Queen Mother. The resumption of their life together, however, did not, apparently, pass the bounds of a cordial understanding, although Margaret had perhaps dreamed of something better.

The King of Navarre, unfaithful by nature, instinctively fought shy of reviving old affairs. His wife could have had this consolation, if she needed it, that she was not the only woman to suffer from his inconstancy. The amiable Charlotte de Sauves charmed him no longer; he had eyes only for Dayelle, the Spanish lady in Catherine's suite.

His lovemaking set a precedent. At La Réole, at Auch, all along the journey, his gentlemen, most of whom were young and all of whom were rough and impetuous, had looked more than fondly on the maids of honour and great ladies. At every stop there was chatter and dancing. At Nérac, the light attractions had time to become more serious, and "slipped from the eye straight to the heart." Even Turenne, a cold statesman, fell violently in love with one of the Queen Mother's maids, La Verne.

There was dancing everywhere, before dinner, in the afternoons, in the evenings. Catherine, who wanted to settle matters and return to Paris, grew visibly annoyed at these flirtations, in spite of her reputation for "gallant" diplomacy. She believed that these philandering Huguenots were deliberately

delaying her negotiations. But her disapproval had no effect; the young people, with a fine Renaissance carelessness, trod the primrose way, and crushed the flowers as they went.

The Church delegates finally arrived, and the conference opened at once, on the 4th of February, 1579. They renewed their old demands: free practice of their religion in all parts of the kingdom, the reinstatement of Condé in his governorship of Picardy, a return to the Edict of 1576, reparations for the damage done to Huguenot property by pillage and arson, and the right to hold all the towns occupied by the Protestants.[1] The debate continued throughout the day, and the Queen of Navarre "was present at the Council in the aforesaid afternoon." The delegates left the room "well satisfied, it seemed, with the answer" of Catherine de' Medici, but "at the very hour of supper, they presented themselves to Her Majesty, and asked leave to depart, giving all appearance of being ill pleased with the means proposed to satisfy their demands." Catherine was "highly incensed" at their impertinence, and she spoke to them "royally and very loud, saying that she would have them all hung as rebels." Whereupon, Margaret "felt in duty bound to calm them all, and even wept, imploring Her Majesty to grant them the peace." [2]

On the Monday morning after Mass, the Queen Mother sat in council for seven or eight hours with the King of Navarre and the delegates, and announced her latest intentions. "And in that the deputies went forth mightily content," says the secretary of Damville, who kept notes of the meeting, "it was held for sure that they would abide in agreement, for no points remained which had not been granted to the satisfaction of both parties." The Convention of Nérac was signed on the 28th of February, 1579, and was ratified by the King on the

[1] *Lettres*, vol. vi, p. 442. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. vi, p. 446.

14th of March. The Protestants gained control of fourteen towns, over and above the eight ceded in the peace of Bergerac, on condition that they return them at the end of six months and in the interim allow free exercise of Catholic worship.

Margaret stayed with her husband, "resolved," writes Catherine, "never to stir from his side again." Her part in the negotiations and her intervention in the final compromise had given her a great reputation for intelligence. She had so taken to heart her husband's interests that she thought of letting her mother continue alone her voyage through Languedoc, while she installed herself permanently at Nérac. But Catherine insisted on her accompanying her. The King of Navarre followed them, leaving them only at the entrance of the ultra-Catholic towns and when they stopped at Castelnaudary to celebrate Easter. He wanted to show the ever-suspicious Churches that, in spite of his courtesy, he still kept his Protestant beliefs. And in deference to his wishes, Margaret gave up the idea of reappearing in the fanatical city of Toulouse.

Between the two there was a complete agreement in default of love. Catherine wished to bring them back to Court, reckoning that the Huguenots would be more likely to carry out the terms of the treaty of Nérac if their leader were far away. The King of Navarre did not oppose the idea of a journey to Paris, but presumably for other reasons. The Duke of Anjou had invaded the Netherlands, where his sister's diplomacy had prepared the way, and after some successes which he had not had the means of following up, he had just come back to France. He was furious with his brother, the King, for not supporting him, and he was impatient to begin the attack again with greater forces. The Protestant world feared that the Duke of Parma, Philip II's ablest general, would take advantage of the moment to crush the Calvinists of the north,

who were struggling with difficulty under the command of William of Orange. The King of Navarre, in the interests of the cause, may possibly have encouraged his allies to sign the peace in order to leave their forces free to pursue the foreign war. It was to be nearer the Duke of Anjou and the frontier that he announced his intention of accompanying Catherine on her return to France.

Margaret also longed to see the Court and the Duke of Anjou again, but only with her husband. To Catherine's suggestion of going with her through Languedoc, Provence, and Dauphiné, while the King of Navarre proceeded alone direct to Paris, she replied by urging that all three take the Limoges route. She did not wish to be separated from him. Yet she was distressed at parting from her mother, and on the day of farewells she shut herself in her room and wept bitterly.

And Henry, as if to win forgiveness for keeping his wife and postponing his journey until the end of the year, showed himself the most conciliatory of party leaders, and the most amiable of sons-in-law. When he knew the exact date of Catherine's departure, he rode, at night, "six great Gascon leagues, as much as ten or twelve in France," to bid her a last farewell. Catherine started back to France on the 8th of May, 1579.

The royal couple then went to Pau, the capital of Béarn, where Margaret made her state entry on the 26th. But her disillusionments were soon to begin.

Béarn was Henry of Bourbon's inheritance from his mother and, like Navarre, was territory over which the King of France could claim no sovereignty. Henry had, indeed, promised during his captivity at the Louvre that he would reinstate the right of Catholic worship in that kingdom, but he had disregarded his word, and the ban continued as in the days of

Jeanne d'Albret. The welcome accorded Margaret made no difference in the existing laws. The only concession granted her was the right to have Mass said in the private chapel for herself and her servants.

Most historians emphasize her love affairs and say little or nothing of her religious fervour. This amounts to but half understanding her curious character. From her earliest years she showed a strong leaning towards the orthodox faith. Young or old, she read works which it would be surprising to find even in the hands of a devotional queen. In the catalogue of her library there appear the names of the major fathers of the Church—St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. John Chrysostom, St. Bernard, and other doctors and defenders of the Faith. One of her most interesting books was a little manual written by Enchiridion d'Eckius, a Latin treatise with which to "refute the heretics." She kept by her side a "preceptor," one Francis Choisnin, a learned scholar, who could coach her in the irrefutable doctrines of the True Church. It was quite evidently in her mind that her sacred duty impelled her to works of propagation and conversion, and she was not the woman to take obligations of the soul lightly.

Her relations with Montaigne at the time of her entry into the Protestant south are very curious. She might have seen him once or twice at Court, and she certainly saw him on her arrival in Gascony. She was familiar with his translation of the works of Raimond Sebond, and had undoubtedly heard him express his criticism of pure reason. The famous *Apology*[1] received a dedication whose flattering terms could be applied to none other than the Queen of Navarre, the princess

[1] Published in 1580.

"daily versed in the art of argument."[1] And he goes on to warn her against the dangers of misusing his fine-edged tool of logic. His attack on pure reason must be used only as a last resort, for to confront opponents with the impotence of reason is to proclaim oneself impotent to convince them. Yet he grants that "if one of the new doctors try to indulge in sophistry at the cost of his salvation and your own, this argument will silence the contagion of his venom." Montaigne probably did not have the Protestants in mind, and only wanted to repudiate, by his paradoxes, all intelligence at the cost of a few unbalanced theories; but Margaret feared heretics more than pagans and atheists, and it was on them that she was eager to exercise her polished dialectic. She was going, as a Catholic queen, to preside over a Protestant Court, amidst a Protestant people, in contact with ministers who looked on papistry as hateful idolatry. If need be, she would confront these eminent Genevan logicians with proof of the vanity of all disputation. She would remind the King of Navarre of the promises he had made, and would point out the risk he ran of losing the King's favour if he persisted in refusing freedom of worship to his Catholic subjects.

An occasion finally presented itself for her to attack the intolerant legislation of Béarn, and at the same time to test her husband's religious temper. During her stay at Pau, and under her very eyes, the Catholics were still forbidden all religious ceremonies. When Mass was said for her in the chapel, the castle drawbridge was raised so that no one could enter and profit by the celebration. But as they were "infinitely desirous of hearing the sacred service, whereof they had long been deprived,"[2] on Whitsunday, the 7th of June, 1579, "they found

[1] *Essais de Montaigne,* vol. ii, ch. xii, p. ii; édition de Bordeaux, pp. 304-305.

[2] Guessard, p. 159.

means" to get inside the castle and slip into the chapel. They were discovered and brought before the King of Navarre's secretary, Du Pin, who had them dragged off to prison in Margaret's presence.

Infuriated by the outrage and the insult done to herself, she went to the King to beg the liberty of the prisoners. Du Pin appeared without being summoned, and before his master had time to answer he proceeded to justify his conduct and let the Queen understand that she ought to be grateful enough for the tolerance she herself enjoyed. In a trembling rage at being admonished by "a man of such class," Margaret implored her husband, if she had any part in his good grace, "to give her her way with this despicable creature." Henry sent Du Pin from the room, and seeing his wife "so wondrously stirred in a passion of righteous anger," he promised to settle matters to her satisfaction.

On second thoughts, however, he realized that the consequences of this little incident might be serious. If he tampered with the religious legislation of the country, he would be sure to provoke a troublesome opposition in the states of Béarn, and a wide-spread resentment among all the Protestants. On the other hand, if he kept the Catholics in prison or handed them over to local justice, he would give the French Court a chance to reproach him for breaking his word. By way of compromise, he decided to leave the whole affair in abeyance until the end of the month, when a new religious conference was to be called. He adjourned the meeting of the States of Béarn, left Pau, and went with the Court to Montauban.

At Eauze, one of the stopping-places, he took to his bed, suffering from "a great and continuous fever, with a piercing pain in his head, which lasted for seventeen days, during which time he took no rest by night or day and had to change per-

petually from one bed to another."[1] Margaret stayed at his side all the time, without even changing her dress. Her attentions were so pleasant and delightful that he praised them to everyone. And somehow, the distressing incident of Whitsuntide was forgotten.

The Vicomte de Turenne was "particularly" instrumental in bringing her closer to her husband. Was he merely touched at her devotion, or had he a more personal interest in winning her gratitude? He was twenty-three or twenty-four years old. His mistress, La Verne, had gone with Catherine, being one of her maids of honour. The Queen of Navarre was twenty-six. Beautiful and emotional, she had come to Gascony in the hope of finding a new and more perfect relation with her husband. She had been scorned in favour of Dayelle. She had to watch him pursue his affairs with the women of her own household, showering them with attentions and little gifts—rose-leaf sweetmeats here, and sugar candy there. Perhaps the two, meeting at the invalid's bedside, found consolation in each other. At any rate, it is odd that Margaret has so little to say of this visit at Montauban, and took so faint an interest in the war-like discussions of the Protestant leaders, who were already irked by the less favourable clauses of Nérac. It is more than probable that her heart and eyes were happily engaged elsewhere.

[1] Guessard, p. 163.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE COURT OF NÉRAC

On leaving Montauban, the Court of Navarre proceeded to Nérac. The Queen, with her sister-in-law, Catherine de Bourbon, and their various attendants, journeyed down the Garonne from Moissac to Agen in six boats. The King of Navarre and his gentlemen followed on horseback. The account of his expenses shows an item of "one crown to a company of sailors" who danced on the river bank for His Majesty's amusement. On the 7th of August the whole Court had assembled at Nérac, where they were to remain for a long time.

The castle was an old fortress,[1] flanked at the four corners by round towers, surrounded by a deep moat, and approached from the west by a drawbridge protected by two smaller towers. All around the central court were the wings which the d'Albrets had begun to tear down to transform the heavy feudal stronghold into a Renaissance palace more suitable to the tastes of the new life. The north wing is the only one still standing, facing full south, graced by an Italian loggia, all arched and decorated with delicate carving. The river Baïse lapped the southern and eastern walls with its yellow waters, and divided the King's garden, planted with laurel and cypress, from the park laid out by Margaret. Within the castle, the bare walls were hung with beautiful tapestries brought from Pau, which did much to relieve the severity and brighten the great halls and square rooms.

[1] Lauzun, *Itinéraire,* pp. 60 and 116.

Here Margaret was to spend the most brilliant months of her reign, few enough, in all conscience. For the moment she was granted her husband's good favour, induced by the kindly efforts of Turenne and enhanced by his memory of her devotion at Eauze. They enjoyed a friendly and happy understanding, and a sense of mutual confidence. After all her journeys and progresses, she could at last indulge her tastes for luxury, display, and splendour. Her revenues were not large enough to satisfy them, but she did not hesitate to borrow huge sums from her Chancellor, or sell the house in Paris that Henry III had given her. She had in good measure the royal and extravagant virtues of all the Valois, their incurable love for magnificence and amusement.

At her own expense, she maintained such a Court as the poor kingdom of Navarre had never boasted, with none of the austerity of that of Jeanne d'Albret. Her own suite of thirty-three ladies was further increased by the household of her sister-in-law. Every day there were balls, concerts, or plays.

She had her musicians in ordinary: two lute players, a piper, six violins, and the choristers from her chapel. The laughter-loving King of Navarre engaged a comedian; he sent for touring companies of Italian players. The Court had its poets, too, and even one great poet, William of Sallust, Seigneur du Bartas. The first collection of his verses, *The Christian Muse*, appeared in 1574, and is dedicated to Mme. Margaret of France, Queen of Navarre:

> Great Henry's daughter, another Henry's queen,
> Whose beauty's equal never has been seen,
> Judith thy poet calls thee,—harken, though he raise
> Naught worth men's hearing save thy wondrous praise.

THE COURT OF NÉRAC

Margaret wanted to establish at Nérac a circle of learning like the one that had graced the Court of France, a school of philosophy in imitation of the Academy of Poetry and Music that had been founded in the reign of Charles IX. D'Aubigné, who knew and admired the Academy of Valois, may have suggested creating one in Gascony. Certainly he is the only historian who mentions it. He gives the names of various "academicians"—du Plessis-Mornay, du Bartas, the King's Councillor, Constant, Ravignan, president of the court of Pau, and several other scholars and gentlemen. It was a gathering of serious men, all Protestants, and the nature of their discussions may be imagined from the fact that a doctor and a lawyer "showed how the wind blew."

But Nérac did not set out to win Pau's title of "Little Geneva." Life was on a far different scale, and if its fame was great enough to inspire Shakespeare, it was precisely because it was so unlike that led in any other capitals. Poets, academies, and societies of pleasure, these there were in France and abroad, but what other Court could claim the actual practice of the pastoral life?

The enjoyment of unknown or rediscovered pleasures, the society of women, many of whom were young and beautiful, the charm of her who surpassed all others, being, as even the cold Montaigne said, "one of those divine and extraordinary beauties that one may sometimes see shining forth like stars through the veil of flesh and earth," all the refinements of the age finally softened the captains and gentlemen of the King of Navarre. They became "as good company as the most gallant at the Court of France, and there was naught to find amiss in them save that they were Huguenots." The passions that had racked the country gave way to new ones. Margaret writes, "of the difference of our religion the King never

spoke. My husband and madame his sister would go in one direction to service, and I and my train to Mass in the chapel in the park. Then when I came forth, we would meet to walk together either in the fine garden among the laurel and cypress, or in the park which I had had made, down the long alleys by the river's bank. And the rest of the day would be spent in all sorts of simple pleasures, with dancing after dinner and in the evenings." [1]

All was not quite so innocent in this idyllic Court as might have been supposed. Henry of Bourbon was showering Fosseuse, one of the maids of honour, with little attentions, the first stage of any journey into the kingdom of the tender emotions. He gave her sweets from Genoa, apricots and saffron pears from Tours, Italian pastries, almond cakes and boxes of comfits—all harmless gifts to his dear little Platonic love.[2] But he also endowed her father with the sum of a hundred and fourteen crowns, "for certain good and just reasons." Indeed, yes!

There was no talk of anything but love. Sully, even the grave Sully, "made love," so he says, "like every other man." [3] But love may have meant no more than serving some lady in all respect and honour. Not for nothing had Margaret read the *Convitio* of Marsilio Ficino, translated by Guy Le Fèvre de la Broderie under the title of *Honest Love,* and dedicated to her. It was an adaptation of one of Plato's dialogues, and represented ideal love. Her spiritualized conception of the divine passion may indeed be at variance with the abandon of her practice, but in theory, at least, her famous Court of Love was Platonic and idealistic. Her delicacy of expression whenever she writes of affairs of heart shows that in spirit and

[1] Guessard, pp. 163-164.
[2] *Itinéraire,* p. 118.
[3] Sully, vol. i, p. 23.

taste she was the first of the *précieuses,* and that despite her many lovers, she was more emotional than sensual.

Henry of Navarre was apt to be impetuous in his passions, and rush the defences "in a soldier's way." It is not surprising that Margaret tried to teach him the finer points in the art of love, tried to make him appreciate the beauty of Plato's rarefied doctrine. But it was not easy to make a hero of romance out of this Béarnais prince, rough and ready in his methods, careless of his appearance, impatient in his desires, who could never "do two things: keep a serious mien or read."[1] In his affair with Fosseuse, however, he was resigned to the rôle of suitor, at any rate as long as she was so very young. And Margaret also had her devoted servitors.

They were the most broad-minded of couples. From the earliest days of their marriage they had recognized their incompatibility of temperament and had agreed to live under a system of mutual independence. Margaret would be devoted to the interests and blind to the passions of her husband; and on his side, he would show little curiosity as to the pleasures she might find elsewhere. The only difference in their conduct was that she excused her love affairs on the grounds of the "honourable liberty" of a sophisticated Court, while he simply took advantage of his good fortunes, and then told his wife all about them.

The fame of this Court spread far and wide. Later, in 1594, Shakespeare celebrated it in "Love's Labour's Lost," where a beautiful French princess came to Navarre and suddenly swept away all the old austerity and vows of self-denial. Public opinion in France did not take so favourable a view of the comedy of love at Nérac. Henry III took delight in promoting the scandalous stories of the Gascon Arcady. A national

[1] *Scaligeriana, verbo Henri IV.*

synod of the Reformed Churches, held at La Rochelle in June, 1578, thundered against the painted faces, the hoops, garnishings, and trinkets, the open bosoms,[1] farthingales, and other inventions of the devil, all of which it forbade to the faithful. It was all the corrupting influence of that Valois-Medici princess.

Even Montaigne, who could certainly understand all ways of life, but who censured excess, warned her. "I advise you," he said, "to observe in your opinions and discourse, as well as in your manners and in all things, a moderation and an avoidance of all that is too new and strange. All extravagances distress me." [2] Is it not possible to read between the lines a criticism, not only of the thoughtless enthusiasms, but of the romantic adventures of a learned Queen who, having pursued the same studies as men, felt that she had the same rights in matters of love?

There is no doubt that the Vicomte de Turenne must be included among Margaret's lovers. Perhaps at first she felt little sympathy for this Huguenot cousin, the closest companion of a husband who set her aside, and she knew him to be desperately in love with La Verne. But after his mistress had gone back to France with the Queen Mother, she had more opportunity to know him better. Like all women of the age, she admired brave men and skilful fencers. Turenne was a famous duellist; he may have reminded her of Bussy d'Amboise, of tender memory. D'Aubigné says in his history that Turenne had "embarked" in the love of the Queen of Navarre, and other witnesses prove that for once he was but telling the truth in recording gossip.

Towards the beginning of 1580 an Italian astrologer in

[1] See Medal of Margaret in 1580, Musée de Cluny, No. 1298.
[2] *Dédicace of the Essais.*

Paris foretold that the Queen of Navarre would be in danger of death from the 21st to the 29th of March, *per conto del honore*. Her chancellor, Pibrac, who happened to be there on a visit, went to the man and was so seriously troubled by his proofs and predictions that he went to the King of France and the Queen Mother. They had both already heard the prophecy, and advised Pibrac to warn the Queen, by their very words admitting that there was some talk of scandal. Pibrac finally decided to write, and advised Margaret to leave Nérac before Easter and go perform her devotions at Port-Sainte-Marie or at Agen, both of which were Catholic towns.

But the explorer of the mysteries of the heavens was singularly ill informed of affairs on earth. Only an Italian mystic could have seriously believed that the King of Navarre would be jealous enough to take his wife's life. With no thought of the fatal Ides of March, the couple were living on terms of cheerful agreement. In February, Henry gave Margaret "two pairs of flowered gloves, all perfumed and adorned with stitching of gold and silver, and a bird-of-paradise head-dress, composed of the whole bird, one of the most beautiful and rarest, and which cost three hundred pounds."[1] He may not have known that Turenne was his wife's lover, unlikely though it seems, but in any case, he was not the man to feel intense resentment.

He had, besides, plenty of other things to take up his attention. On the 3rd of March Philip Strozzi, the Colonel-General of the French infantry, had come to Nérac with the royal demand to secure the places of safety held by the Protestants.

As a matter of fact, the lovers had quarrelled early in 1580 for reasons which we do not know. If any credit can be placed

[1] *Itinéraire*, pp. 128-129.

in the *Divorce Satyrique,* that coarse pamphlet, Margaret had not received from Turenne the pleasure she had expected, and dismissed him with scurrilous comparisons. Turenne went to Castres, where his presence is recorded on January 11th. Whatever the truth of the matter may be, it is clear that Turenne made the break. He says, "I had a reason which led me to leave the King, to leave behind those passions which tear our souls and bodies, and in the end bring them but shame and sorrow."[1] His own interest as well as his conscience forced him to leave Nérac. A new war seemed to be drawing near, and he could not afford to risk either his friendship with the King of Navarre or his own reputation among the stricter members of his faith. He left for good in March, 1580.

His going is more than a mere date in the chronology of Margaret's love history—it is the prelude to the taking up of arms. Most of the Protestant gentlemen also left to seek their own posts. No more *fêtes* and concerts and quiet walks; no more tender proposals whispered along the shady alleys or by the banks of the Baïse. War was coming.

Suddenly, in April, 1580, the Huguenot leaders, with no promise of foreign support, and against the advice of La Rochelle and the Church authorities, put their forces into the field. Margaret's *Mémoires* and letters prove very clearly that she was not responsible for the resumption of hostilities. She had not ceased to warn the Court of France of the bitterness of the Protestants, and at the same time she had consistently pointed out to the King of Navarre and his Council "how little profitable this war would be to them when they had an adversary like Marshal de Biron, who would neither treat with them nor show them any mercy, as the others had done."[2] Wife of the King of Navarre and sister of the King

[1] Turenne, p. 119. [2] Guessard, p. 165.

of France, no matter what decision she might take, she would estrange one or the other. While there was still time, she begged her dear friend, the Duchess of Uzès, to do all she could to preserve the peace. A letter from her husband, dated only five days before the war broke out, confirms what she says of her desire for peace. "It is a great sorrow to me that instead of the satisfaction I was eager to give you, it needs must be the opposite and that you should have the unhappiness of seeing my state reduced to such misfortune." [1] Up to the very last moment she believed in the possibility of peace, just because she wished it with all her heart. She wrote to Pibrac in Paris, "One must not think that those of the religion really wish to take up arms."

But contrary to her hope, war broke out and she had to take sides. "The honour," says she, which her husband paid her in "loving her"—we know what to understand by that—forbade her deserting him. She therefore resolved to follow out his fortune. The capture of Cahors at the end of May probably strengthened her decision. The four days' fight in the streets of the town, and the triumphant return of the King of Navarre, "all stained with blood and powder," may have appealed to her love of the romantic and heroic. She was very active all during June in preventing certain towns from declaring against him, and promised the Councillors of Auch and Condom to protect them against Huguenot attack if they would keep a strict neutrality.[2]

She did not, however, make an open break with the Court of France, and continued to employ the Duchess of Uzès to keep up her contact with it. She wished to have it believed that she was merely a helpless spectator, watching the develop-

[1] *Lettres missives*, vol. i, p. 285.
[2] Lauzun, *Lettres inédites de Condom*, p. 21.

ment of hostilities. She wrote constantly of the distress and sorrow she was suffering, and begged her mother to love her in spite of everything.

But she did not indulge in undue mourning. She maintained her Court of ladies as gaily as in the past. She gave as many orders as before the war to her silversmiths, goldsmiths, upholsterers, mantle-makers and shoemakers. That summer she sent for water from the mills of Barbaste for her baths. Had the waters of the Galise, which turned those picturesque wheels, more freshness and tonic quality than the Baïse? She bought gowns, veils, silks, ribbons, a Venetian mirror framed in mother-of-pearl, gold, pearls, and silver. She and her maids held themselves in readiness for any game of love or chance.

She had obtained a promise from the King and the Queen Mother that Marshal de Biron would not come within three leagues of Nérac, on condition that the King of Navarre did not enter the town. But he so heartily enjoyed the society of the ladies and especially that of Fosseuse, that he often came to visit them, and on one occasion stayed three nights, "not being able to tear himself away from so pleasing a company." The watchful de Biron then appeared before the walls with "all his army in battle array, and within range of shot." The King of Navarre hastily posted some of his soldiers in the vineyards, but no fighting took place, for a heavy rainfall had soaked the powder for the arquebuses. As he withdrew, de Biron fired seven or eight cannon shots into the town, "of which one reached even to the castle." [1] With great gallantry, he sent a trumpeter to the Queen to apologize for having done his duty against the violator of the neutrality, and that incident in the polite warfare was closed.

[1] Guessard, pp. 167-169.

De Biron meanwhile carried on his campaign so vigorously that Margaret appealed for mercy. She implored her mother to send the Duke of Anjou down into Gascony to reëstablish peace. The proposal suited him; he was still impatient to renew his attack on the Netherlands, and it was greatly to his interest to reconcile the combatants in order to obtain the troops he needed for his enterprise. For exactly opposite reasons, Henry III and Catherine de' Medici accepted him as mediator. They hoped to engage him in endless negotiations in the south and postpone indefinitely any fresh challenge to the power of Spain.

The Duke came to an agreement with the King of Navarre at Fleix in November, 1580. The Protestants received permission to retain for six years the places of surety which had been granted at Nérac. But would they consent to restore the others? The French Court hoped that their ambassador would waste much time and trouble over the matter.

Margaret, too, wanted to delay this very dear brother as long as possible. But her anxiety was not entirely for his sake. At La Fère, on her return from the Netherlands, she may have met one of his gentlemen, Champvallon. At the time her mind was full of Bussy, and it was not her nature to divide her attentions. Now, however, she was without any absorbing attachment. After her unfortunate attempt at playing the part of the faithful wife, she had accepted Turenne. In physical perfection and warmth of passion he had not compared to Bussy, and he had either left her or been dismissed. At Fleix, she met Champvallon for the second time.

Jacques de Harlay, lord of Champvallon, belonged to a family which was distinguished in many branches. He was the youngest son of Louis de Harlay, lord of Césy, and Louise Stuart Carr, a noble lady related to the royal house of Scot-

land. Although the exact date of his birth is unknown, he was apparently about the same age as Margaret. He was very handsome, the finest man of the age, it is said. And Margaret all her life had loved physical beauty as the visible manifestation of God. He was cultivated, a poet, even, in his leisure hours, although indeed the powers of his mind were forgotten in the dazzling splendour of his body. This was the young man who had been made chief equerry to the Duke of Anjou.

At Fleix, while the King of Navarre and the Duke of Anjou were debating the conditions of the peace, Margaret was probably too much engrossed in the negotiations to be much with Champvallon. It was probably at Coutras, where the Court of Navarre and the French suite spent the whole month of December, that they became lovers. During the next two months Margaret and the Duke of Anjou stayed in the old fortress of the Foix-Candale at Cadillac, while the King of Navarre visited his estates, and d'Aubigné speaks of her "intimacy" with the chief equerry.[1]

Although Champvallon's name never appears in the *Mémoires,* it is very evident from other sources that Margaret was deeply in love with him. It would be absurd to contend that this was her first affair, but it seems that now, when she was nearing thirty, she fell in love body and soul, and felt, for the first time in her life, a new tenderness, more exquisite and more searing—the full experience of passionate love.

It is easy to imagine what she suffered at her lover's departure in April. After six months spent, or as he thought wasted, in seeing that the terms of the treaty of Fleix were observed, the Duke of Anjou summoned his equerry and left Gascony on the way to a new invasion of the Netherlands, in spite of the orders of the King and the disapproval of the

[1] *Histoire Universelle,* vol. vi, p. 159.

Queen Mother. Margaret, of course, had her own reason for wanting to keep him with her, and she found it hard to forgive his determination. She gave up her brilliant costumes and turned to books, the consolation she had once before enjoyed in captivity. She bought a Plutarch, the *Mémoires* of du Bellay, the *Orations* of Cicero and a Latin-Greek dictionary. She tried to make her peace with God by presenting the nuns of Paravis with ten and a half ells of black canvas to line a chasuble, a stole, and an altar cloth of silver and black silk. Black is the keynote, as if religion itself should wear mourning for the sorrows of love.

Margaret had tried her best to detain her brother, for her heart was in the task, but no effort and no affection served to move the Prince from his headstrong determination. Catherine was, nevertheless, distinctly annoyed that she had not been successful. A break seemed inevitable between Henry III and the Duke of Anjou; the south was far from subdued, and she feared some new difficulties with the Huguenot leaders. The King took this occasion to write to his sister and brother-in-law, and invite them to come to Court again.

For a number of reasons, aside from the all-important one of the heart, Margaret was anxious to leave Gascony. The suggestion of Henry III was more than welcome to her, and she set herself to making her husband decide to accompany her. He was naturally very suspicious of any advances, and made one excuse after another, but so greatly did she want to leave that she persisted in believing that she could accomplish her purpose.

Gascony, which a year before she had loved, was no longer agreeable to her. For one thing, she was suffering from considerable financial embarrassment. Her tastes were simply out of all proportion to her means, and she was born to live

without counting the cost. The travelling money which Henry III had given her had taken her only to the gateway of the south. After she left Bordeaux, she had to pay her own expenses, and at once she felt the insufficiency of her funds. She had borrowed huge sums from Pibrac, with no very clear idea how they were to be repaid.

Her relations with her husband at this time were a little upset, too. Although his wife had taken his part and compromised herself in his interest in the last war, the King of Navarre forgot all this devotion in the vexation of an amorous difficulty. At Coutras and at Cadillac he had noticed that the Duke of Anjou was pursuing Fosseuse with the same ends in view that he had himself, and he blamed Margaret for furthering the affair. She at once explained the situation to the Duke, who "conquered his passion and spoke no more" to Fosseuse. But the young girl, "who dearly loved" the King of Navarre, soothed his jealousy by allowing him more "intimacy than honour can permit," and she gave herself "so entirely to content him in all that he wanted of her that, unfortunately, she became with child." From that moment the amiable lady-in-waiting turned into a spiteful rival. In no time at all the Queen of Navarre found her husband "greatly altered." "He avoided me," she says; "he hid himself from me, and he found my company no longer pleasing." [1]

As soon as the Court had returned to Nérac, after the departure of the Duke of Anjou, the favourite put into her lover's head the idea of going to the hot springs in Béarn, where she could more easily hide her condition. The journey meant going through Pau, and Margaret had vowed never to set foot in that "Little Geneva" again. She begged her husband to excuse her from accompanying him, and finally he departed

[1] Guessard, pp. 174-175.

with Fosseuse, his old mistress, Rebours, and a governess. Margaret went to wait for them at Bagnères-de-Bigorre, "shedding as many tears as they drank drops of water where they were."[1]

She had, indeed, received alarming news from Rebours. Fosseuse was boasting that if she bore a son she would have the lawful wife put aside and would make her royal lover marry her. Margaret, with some idea of protecting herself against her rival, tried the benefit of the springs. "Today," she told her husband, "I have drunk of them, and hope they will serve me, if not for all my ills, at least for that which I most desire for your contentment."[2] That is, to give him an heir.

The King of Navarre and his feminine quartet finally came back to Nérac, once more sparing the Queen the humiliation of passing through Pau. Margaret, who had real sympathy for human weaknesses, offered to save the girl from the gossip of the Court and keep her in a private house until the time of her delivery. But Fosseuse suspected her of some dark design, protested loudly, and went to complain to the King. He took Margaret to task, but on the morning of the confinement he came to his wife and begged her to get up and attend his mistress. "You know," he said, "how dear she is to me, and I beseech you to oblige me in this." Margaret replied that she honoured him too much to take offence at anything that "came from him," and that she would go and care for her as if she were her daughter. She arose at once, had Fosseuse brought into a separate room, and, to do away with busybodies, she sent the King and all the Court off hunting. "God willed," she adds, "that Fosseuse bore only a girl, who soon died." It is a cry of relief; she had really believed that her husband was capable of marrying his mistress if she had had a son.

[1] Guessard, p. 176.

[2] *Itinéraire*, p. 178.

Henry tried her patience and tolerance a little too far. When he returned from hunting that night, he found Margaret in bed, worn out with fatigue. He asked her then to go visit the girl, as she did all her maids when they were ill, "thinking by that means to stop the talk that was running about." But she flatly refused to make herself a laughing-stock by this excess of complacency. "He was mightily wroth," she says, though she showed him that she did not deserve such treatment. Fosseuse "often set him thus against me," she adds.

Deprived of her lover's company, humiliated by her husband, Margaret gladly welcomed the advances of Henry III. Catherine expected her daughter to bring the King of Navarre to Court with her, counting perhaps on the fascination of Fosseuse, who would be obliged to follow her mistress.

The journey was finally undertaken. She left Nérac on the 29th of January, 1582, accompanied by her husband, who could not bear to be separated from Fosseuse. Catherine came to Poitou to see her son-in-law and "give him assurance of the good will of the King." But at La Mothe-Saint-Héraye, where they met, he refused to go beyond the boundary of Protestant jurisdiction.

Catherine's hope of removing the leader of the Huguenot party and asserting the royal authority in the south came to nothing. She had underestimated the King of Navarre's intelligence. Margaret still longed to go to France. She was tired of her monotonous life in a tiny capital; she was disappointed in her husband's lack of sympathy; she was humiliated by his selfish exigencies and undisguised love affairs. In France, she would find a devoted mother, a beloved brother, a King who might be more compassionate; and above all, she promised herself the joy of seeing Champvallon again. She was determined to carry on her journey.

CHAPTER EIGHT

AN INTERLUDE AWAY FROM GASCONY

MARGARET left La Mothe-Saint-Héraye with the determined hope of bringing her husband eventually to the Court of France. But the rôle of decoy, with all her interest at stake, was not an easy one. When they separated, Henry had charged her to give assurance to the King and Queen Mother that he would not go far away, but would stay in the south only to banish any further causes for mistrust. All of a sudden, on the excuse of illness, he left La Rochelle for Béarn and the hot springs.[1] The letter in which he informed his wife of his broken promise reached her in the course of her journey, beyond Chenonceaux. She reproved him gently. "I beg you very humbly, think what credit they can place in any of my words which concern you, for they can only believe either that I am very ill informed or that I wish to deceive them. This is not the way to give me means to help your affairs, a thing which will prejudice you more than myself. I beg you to believe this is the only reason which brings me to speak to you thus."[2] Then she went on to tell him of the difficulties that were confronting them.

Complaints were coming from Languedoc, where two Protestant captains had violated the peace by seizing the castle of Minerve and refusing to restore Lunel.[3] The Duke of An-

[1] *Lettres missives,* p. 449, April 21.
[2] Guessard, pp. 279-280.
[3] D. Vaissette, *Histoire Générale de Languedoc,* vol. xi, pp. 699-700.

jou's venture in the Netherlands was going badly; after a few minor successes he had been obliged to fall back on Câtelet. At the same time Catherine was preparing a fleet to go to the assistance of the Pretender of Portugal and threaten the passage of Spanish galleons coming from the New World with cargoes of gold and silver.

Henry III had good reason to stay near the Flemish frontier, where a counter attack from Spain might be expected at any time. But all the same, it was dangerous for the Protestants to press him too hard, for both he and Catherine realized that an invasion of the south was the only effective means of restoring the royal authority, if the disturbances should long continue.

The closer Margaret got to the Court, the more clearly could she discern the sinister currents. The King had realized the peril of his position, and, incapable of exercising his own authority, he had determined to put the power into the hands of a chosen few. His brother was the most disobedient of subjects, and upon occasion the most formidable of enemies. Even in times of peace he had to expect the opposition of the King of Navarre and his cousin, Condé. The noble families whom his predecessors had created as counterbalance to the Princes of the Blood were hostile to him. The governors of the provinces pretended to acknowledge him, but often acted as independent rulers. His mother seemed too timorous and too absorbed in trying to arrange a Portuguese marriage, too willing to countenance the Duke of Anjou's activities. Against all his enemies, declared or covert, he could conceive of no more adequate support than that of servitors absolutely devoted to his person and dependent upon his prestige. From the members of his suite and from the circle of his comrades he chose his councillors and those destined to carry out his sovereign

will. Among all his *mignons,* he specially honoured two, d'Epernon and Joyeuse, and in them he sought his support and placed his hopes. The former he made Admiral of France, and the latter Colonel-General of the French infantry. He made them dukes and peers of the realm, so that they would equal the Princes of the Blood. He wanted them to be rich and powerful. D'Epernon became governor of the three bishoprics—Metz, Toul, and Verdun. Joyeuse got Normandy, hitherto reserved for a Prince of the Blood. If the King succeeded in ousting Damville and putting d'Epernon in his place, even the south of France would be in the hands of these favourites.

Margaret instantly appreciated the changed character of the Court when she reached Fontainebleau on the 28th of April. The first words of her letter, written at the beginning of May, are missing, and one can only suppose that the persons who received her coldly, but "professed much in fine language," were the *archimignons,* who naturally viewed her arrival with alarm. The most interesting passage concerns the Guises: "Very different is the truth to what we were told of Monsieur de Maine [younger brother of the Duke of Guise]. He has grown so strangely fat that he is deformed. Monsieur de Guise is very thin and aged. They are little followed, and often give parties for tennis, games of ball, and pall-mall to draw the nobility to them, but those who go twice may be sure of a reprimand, which is proof enough of a jealousy between them and the Dukes." She used this rivalry as another argument to beg her husband to come to Court, pointing out all the benefits he could obtain, and the good he could do the Protestant cause by appearing more amenable. Her letter ends with the words, "I beg you very humbly to receive this as from the person who

loves you most, and who most desires your good fortune, as indeed I trust experience will teach you."[1]

Her protests of wifely devotion are more than opportune, for at the same time she was about to give him a disagreeable shock. Fosseuse had come with the two queens to Fontainebleau, but her presence was an embarrassment. The whole Court knew that she had borne a child to the King of Navarre, and the morals of the age, indulgent enough to unobtrusive sin, would not permit a wife to keep her husband's notorious mistress in her service. Catherine, punctilious as ever where Margaret was concerned, struck the name of this "fair bitch" from the list of maids of honour. As soon as the King of Navarre heard of her dismissal, he took offence as at a personal insult. Whether he was sincere, or whether he was merely seeking a pretext for evading his vague promises of La Mothe-Saint-Héraye would be hard to say; he sent Margaret a very sharp letter, accusing her of luring him to Court with no thought of his safety, of driving away his cherished Fosseuse —his "daughter," he saw fit to call her—and of taking no pains to protect his interests.

Margaret defended herself against the injustice of his remarks, repeating her assurances of good faith, and adding the wistful comment, "in the matter of Fosseuse, I have suffered what no simple lady, I will not say princess, could bear, having helped her, hidden her fault, and ever after kept her by my side." Her tears told Catherine of the tone of her husband's letter, and she too wrote to him in no uncertain terms: "You are not the first young husband not too careful in such affairs, but indeed I find you the first and the only one to use such language to his wife after the event."[2] She went on to remind him of Margaret's exalted position, and upbraided him

[1] Guessard, p. 285. [2] *Lettres de Catherine*, vol. vii, pp. 36-37.

for letting a folly of youth become an issue that might affect the peace of the kingdom.

Their combined missives must have had some effect, for the correspondence between husband and wife was resumed on its old friendly basis. Margaret still urged him to come to Court, and reported once again the King's wish that his brother-in-law should appear in person.

Suddenly there came a break in the sequence of the letters. It was at the time when the scandal of the trial of Salcède held all diplomatic circles breathless and alarmed. This gentleman of Spanish origin, though a resident of France, was arrested at Bruges in July, 1582, on the charge of attempting the life of the Duke of Anjou. On the rack he confessed, and named Alexander Farnese as the instigator of the crime, and the Guises as his accomplices. He was brought to Paris for judgment before the Parliament, where he accused the Guises, cleared them, implicated them again, and finally exonerated them entirely. He was sentenced to be drawn and quartered, and on the 26th of October was executed.

The poor wretch admitted at Paris that the charges he had made at Bruges had all been suggested to him by adherents of the Duke of Anjou, and notably by a certain Chartier.[1] This man was an extremely clever adventurer who had acted as liaison officer for the Huguenots. Inventive and unscrupulous, he was perfectly capable of planning a plot, and drawing into its toils all the enemies of his master, the Duke. The King of Navarre, however, found it useful to believe the first version of the case. He clung to Salcède's original story as his excuse for refusing to stir from Gascony, having been warned, he said, that those of the House of Guise were seeking to have him put out of the way."[2]

[1] Desjardins, vol. iv, p. 424.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 431.

Margaret says nothing of the Salcède affair, although she was interested on more than one score. Through it she nearly lost the man she most loved, the lover she was so looking forward to finding once more at the Court of France. The year of absence had been passed in anguish and anxiety for his safety; her letters are those of any woman distraught by love and fear.

As time went on, however, she had to bear another kind of suffering. He was deceiving her. What mistress—perhaps that sorceress, Mme. de Sauves—had beguiled Champvallon from their "beautiful and blessed love," had "turned his affections from the heights to which they had so gloriously mounted"? Her first thought was to accept the blow and scorch her faithless lover with her scorn, but the chill of disillusion had so "frozen her heart and turned her hand to stone" that she could not "bring the pen to such a message." A mutual friend intervened, and she let her only revenge be a portrait of herself and the remark that her beauty could no doubt find consolation elsewhere.[1]

On her way to France, or even after her arrival at Court, she heard the news of a more serious betrayal—the approaching marriage of her lover. Champvallon was ambitious; he belonged to the "noblesse of the robe," he aspired to distinction in that of the sword. When the Duke of Bouillon offered him the hand of his sister, Catherine de la Mark, châtelaine of Breval, he could not resist the temptation of improving his status. Then indeed was Margaret in despair. "There is no longer justice in heaven nor fidelity on earth! O God! what must my soul bear? What more remains, O merciless Heaven, to overwhelm me with such sorrow?" She longed for death,

[1] Guessard, pp. 454-455.

"I beseech the gods to hasten his dragging footsteps, and blessed release." [1]

The marriage had been fixed for the month of August. At the appointed time, Champvallon left the Duke of Anjou and set off for Dunkirk, where he was to meet his betrothed. There he received an anonymous letter, supposedly from his friend Bodin, warning him that he had been denounced by Salcède and should return at once to justify himself. He started back for Bruges, not suspecting that this recall was a plot against his life, but he was so well attended that the assassins did not dare attack him. Bodin knew nothing of the letter and the Duke of Anjou treated the whole matter as a joke, saying that "he had thought to enjoy his mistress, but had been properly fooled." [2]

Du Vair bears witness that the trial of Salcède furnished an occasion for the Duke of Anjou to dispose of some of his followers "who were no longer agreeable to him." [3] Perhaps the Duke wanted to punish the man who had hurt his sister and had chosen the most timely method. At any rate, Champvallon was no longer in favour.

In the meantime, from an unexpected quarter there came material assistance for the invasion of the Netherlands. The Calvinists of the country had been critical of the Duke's efforts and grudging of their funds. Catherine, still intent on humiliating Spain, stepped into the breach. She recruited ten or twelve thousand infantry soldiers, fifteen hundred horses, and put Marshal de Biron in command, the ablest general of the kingdom. Henry III gave his tacit consent. He had heard with great indignation that the Marquis de Santa-Cruz, after defeating the French fleet at the Azores in July, had murdered

[1] Guessard, p. 455.
[2] Lalanne, *Anecdotes de l'Histoire de France,* pp. 225-226.
[3] *Ibid.,* pp. 211-212.

in cold blood the admiral, Philip Strozzi, had executed the gentlemen, hung the sailors, and published a triumphant report of the whole proceeding. Much as he hated to trust his finances and security to his brother, he felt that the action called for revenge. The main French army was encamped before Antwerp, but the town magistrates allowed only the Duke and his gentlemen to enter, because they were afraid of the excesses of foreign troops. One day, when he was coming out, supposedly to review his forces, some soldiers fell upon the guards before they had time to raise the drawbridge again. The rest of the army swarmed up, forced their way into the town, and set to looting and pillaging. But the inhabitants barricaded the streets, and from every point of vantage attacked the invaders, annihilating nearly the entire number. In all the Dutch towns where the French had sufficient force the same surprise attack was attempted, with failure everywhere except at Dunkirk, Termonde, and Dixmude. St. Anthony's Day at Antwerp, the most disgraceful of these treacherous ambuscades, aroused much ill feeling and, unhappily for the Duke of Anjou, awakened memories of St. Bartholomew. The towns shut their gates, indifferent or actively hostile to this robber Prince.

The progress of the Duke of Parma, the retreat of the French troops from Antwerp to Dunkirk, and the Catholic reaction reported in Germany disturbed the Protestant powers. The King of Navarre sent word to the Prince of Orange that if "the Estates could win the approval of the Duke of Anjou to the appointment of the King of Navarre as Regent and Lieutenant-General, he would gladly accept this charge for the zeal and love he has for their preservation and defence." [1]

[1] Groen van Prinsterer, vol. viii, p. 167.

Since it was very important for him to know the news of Court and resume his alliance with the Duke of Anjou, he renewed his correspondence with Margaret, which he had allowed to lapse. Proud of being a loyal friend, if not a faithful wife, she received his advances with good grace, writing him that she praised God that "it pleased you to recognize that time and the present state of affairs provide infinite reasons to bind me still more closely to the service that I owe you." She bade him be careful to satisfy the King in the matter of the places of surety, for Henry III had been displeased by the refusal of some of the Huguenots to surrender Mur-de-Barrez. She apologized for the delay of the post, and ended with several assertions of the King's kindly humour.

The King of Navarre, however, refused to stir, and she stopped writing to him, being by this time either seriously angry or absorbed in a renewal of her love affair. She had seen Champvallon again, though one cannot say at what time, and she had forgiven him. Their letters are not dated, and the incidents mentioned in them can be placed only approximately. The Queen had bought the house belonging to the Chancellor de Birague in the Couture Sainte-Catherine, but she did not move into it until November. The summer she spent visiting in the neighbourhood of Paris, at Fontainebleau, Saint-Maur-des-Fossés, Villers-Cotterets and Monceaux; during October and December she stayed at the Louvre.[1]

The anonymous author of the *Divorce Satyrique* says that it was here that Champvallon came to rejoin the Queen of Navarre, and for greater secrecy was carried in a large wooden box into her very chamber. She awaited him "in a bed lighted by many tapers, lying between two sheets of black taffeta, and surrounded by other luxuries."[2] The time is probably per-

[1] L'Estoile, vol. ii, p. 96.
[2] Réaume, *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. ii, pp. 662-663.

fectly accurate; their reunion took place some months after Champvallon's unfaithful venture into matrimony.

They had more opportunities of seeing each other when she returned to the Hôtel de Navarre, to stay for the first seven months of 1583, but even there they had to take precautions. Apparently he was unhappy in his marriage, saying it had been forced upon him. And she in turn spoke of the misery of hers, "Ah, no, let it never be said that marriages are made in heaven; the gods do not commit so great an injustice. . . . But, my radiant sun, let us scatter the clouds of these unhappy obstacles which separate our bodies, but which can never separate our souls,—united in an eternal destiny and bound with a deathless bond." [1] He was jealous of her, but she delighted in these "childish tempers" as tokens of his love, and gladly would she provoke them to enjoy "so rapturous a game."

The game was not without danger. Margaret had many enemies, anxious to spy out any indiscretion, and amongst them was d'Epernon. She had always opposed him and his enervating influence over the King; she now defied his power as if she had nothing to fear. Champvallon came to live in Paris. When she could not see him, she wrote at length. But she began to be frightened for him, foreseeing some attack, and she sent him word not to come to her at a certain rendezvous. It would be little enough to die for so divine a thing as her passion for him, but she cries: "Put you in danger! Never, on my life. There is no pain so cruel that I would not rather suffer it. In this I give a great proof of my love by denying myself the pleasure of the sight of you, which I hold is as necessary for me as is the sun for the spring flowers which fade at his absence no more quickly than do my life and beauty lose their lustre without the light of your eyes." [2]

[1] Guessard, pp. 470-471. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 473-475.

What a mistress, and how ready to sacrifice even her own pleasure! There is no doubt that she loved him—adored him, with all her body, soul, and imagination. But the two lovers did not know only an undiluted joy. Two letters of Champvallon show that upon occasion she could make him pay for the privilege of royal possession.[1] Proud, violent, and more than woman, a queen, she sometimes would refuse to see him and seemed to take pleasure in reducing him to a pitiable state. He begged her to cease "these torments with which you have afflicted me since your perfections have made me their slave. Have pity on me, my heart, and bear this for one who loves you so greatly. Very humbly do I kiss your beautiful hands." The god would become only an earthworm in love with a star.

Her special confidantes were Mme. de Duras and Mlle. de Béthune, both of them ladies who welcomed the pleasures of love and gladly played their parts. Visitors and gay companies filled the Hôtel de Navarre and did not even leave Margaret time to recopy her letters. The inimitable life of the Court of Nérac began all over again. The festivities went their own sweet way, and gossip as well. The affair with Champvallon was so publicly known that it made a great scandal, what Busini described significantly as *un gran bordello*.[2]

Henry III had several reasons for being angry with this sister whom he did not love. She had not brought the King of Navarre to Court, the only good service she could render him. She criticized him. At the last, she paraded her intimacy with Champvallon at a time when he was in the throes of a devotional crisis. The humiliations of his royal authority, the revolts of the Huguenots, the disobedience of the Duke of Anjou, orgies, and illness brought him to the point of trying

[1] Guessard, pp. 477-478.

[2] Desjardins, vol. iii, p. 466.

to propitiate God by a series of pious exercises. The Papal Nuncio wrote to Gregory XIII with much satisfaction that "His Majesty is troubled in soul by the fear of God."

In March, 1583, he instituted a brotherhood of penitents,[1] and in April made a pilgrimage, barefooted, from Chartres to Notre-Dame de Cléry. He planned extensive reforms throughout the kingdom, dismissed his musicians, and prohibited balls and concerts.[2] All this access of devotion boded ill for the companions and pleasures of the Queen of Navarre.

He bore a grudge against Margaret for her quarrels with his *mignons,* but above all for her attachment to the Duke of Anjou, that "maggot," that "snout," whose fruitless ambition endangered "kingdom, honour and all."[3] This troublesome young man had retired to Dunkirk, borne in a litter and suffering from an "illness."

Catherine went to meet him at Chaulnes to ask him once more to give up his enterprise and keep only Cambrai. They met on the 11th of July, and in a few days came to a satisfactory agreement. Both Catherine and the King were very pleased at the prospect of having settled this prolonged difficulty. Henry III wrote to his brother to acknowledge his promises, and implored him to abandon an enterprise that was a "cause of ruin to France."[4]

And so he was much surprised by the disquieting news that the Duke of Anjou had commanded his troops to meet him at Ribemont on the 25th of July. Had he deceived his mother at Chaulnes, or had he simply changed his mind? It is supposed that Balagny, the Governor of Cambrai, revived his pride and expectations.[5] Catherine pretended not to believe a word of the reports, but she was troubled. She learned through her

[1] Guessard, p. 459.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 462-464.
[3] *Neg. Dipl.*, vol. iii, pp. 463, 464, note 1.
[4] Kervyn de Lettenhove, vol. vi, p. 468.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 470.

excellent intelligence system that Margaret had sent a man to the Duke "to turn him away from his promises and make him take up some new evil intent." She had no doubt that her daughter was capable of inciting the Duke to continue his venture in the Netherlands, in spite of the meeting at Chaulnes. She must have regretted bringing this ungrateful and disobedient girl back to France.

Even earlier than this, Henry III had bidden his mother tell his sister that she must dismiss Mme. de Duras and Mlle. de Béthune from her service, for their unsavoury reputations were compromising her. Margaret countered by saying that the Queen Mother still kept Mme. de Sauves with her. In her anger, she declared that she would go back to Navarre, and asked for the money she would need on the journey. Delighted at this threat, Catherine offered to pay back the fifty thousand pounds she owed her, either by granting her lands to sell, or an income of four thousand pounds.

Margaret probably hoped that the business of settlement would give her enough time to get the Duke of Anjou to intervene in her favour. But the King wanted to put an end to all these intrigues of love and politics. He ordered his sister to get rid of de Duras and de Béthune, whom he suspected of conniving in other things than love affairs. Catherine was established in Paris and he was in the Château de Madrid in the Bois de Boulogne, near enough to see his mother daily, if he cared to. From there, on the 4th of August, he wrote the King of Navarre that, having discovered the scandalous life of the two ladies, he was determined to drive them away from his sister the Queen, "as very dangerous vermin not to be endured nigh to a princess of such high estate." [1] The letter was all by his own hand, and he had it delivered by one of the grooms

[1] Du Plessis-Mornay, vol. ii, p. 564.

of the wardrobe. Henry of Navarre received it at Saint-Foy-la-Grande, near Bergerac, and he replied on the 12th of August, probably on the very day of the courier's arrival. He thanked the King for the "special care" he had shown in the matter, adding, "for a long time the rumour of the evil and scandalous life led by Mme. de Duras and Mlle. de Béthune had come to my ears . . . but I considered that, my wife having the honour to be to you what she is, and being near Your Majesties, I would be wronging your good nature were I to appear more watchful at a distance than Your Majesties were at hand."[1]

The husband and brother pretended to find Margaret guilty of no more serious crime than an unfortunate management of her household. But with no warning, the King ordered his sister to leave Paris at once. He sent his sergeants of patrol to search Champvallon's lodging that very night; but they did not find the man they sought. It was certainly an outrage, even without the embroidery of legend; it was a summary command to leave Paris, and the insult was still further aggravated by incidents in the departure.

Henry III had not seen Margaret since his return from Mézières, and on the day after his brutal dismissal he left for Bourbon-Lancy without saying good-bye to her. At Bourg-la-Reine, his escort met that of the Queen of Navarre, who had stopped there for dinner. He pretended not to see his sister, though the windows of his coach were open. There was even worse humiliation in store for her. The next day, as she was going on to Saint-Clerc, a company of musketeers stopped her, held up her whole suite and her own litter, made her raise her mask, saying it was by the King's order, and in her

[1] *Lettres missives*, vol. i, p. 574. (Lauzun contests the authenticity of this letter, but without cause.)

very presence seized some of her servants as prisoners. At the same time another patrol arrested Mme. de Duras and Mlle. de Béthune and a chambermaid named Barbe, who were travelling by a different road. The King had all these persons brought before him in the Abbey of Ferrières, where he interrogated each one separately. He enquired "with his own lips of the conversation, manners, life, and honour of the Queen, his sister." L'Estoile asserts that he even asked them about the rumour that she had borne a child to the young Champvallon. Although he could extract no information from his prisoners, he did not set them at liberty. After waiting all day at Palaiseau, practically alone and unattended, Margaret continued her journey to Gascony.

Catherine had been preparing for over a month to raise the funds necessary for a return journey, but she was probably greatly surprised by the sudden decision of Henry III to precipitate the departure. She went to Passy to escape the prayers and tears of her banished daughter. It was never her custom to oppose the will of the King, but in her heart she censured these outbursts of passion that threatened to break up any agreement with the Duke of Anjou, and that would embitter all relations with the King of Navarre. The mischief was not easily to be repaired. She knew how obstinate the King could be, infatuated as he was with the idea of his divine rights. Her letter asking him to set at liberty the two ladies, de Duras and de Béthune was ill received.[1] But he did grant the favour, as if of his own inclination, a little later. Catherine decided that it would be wiser to leave the settlement of this delicate affair entirely to his judgment. All she could do was urge the Duke of Anjou to continue disbanding his army.

As soon as the King of Navarre heard of the insult done to

[1] *Lettres*, vol. viii, p. 126, note 1.

his wife, he sent the most prominent member of his Council, du Plesis-Mornay, to demand an explanation. He had quite approved of dismissing Mme. de Duras and Mlle. de Béthune, women of bad reputation, but he did not think that the King of France should have ordered the Queen of Navarre to leave Paris, nor that he should have appeared not to know her at Bourg-la-Reine and submitted her to the indignity of being searched by archers. He insisted upon knowing the reason for such offensive acts. Du Plessis went straight to Paris, and, not finding Henry III there, he turned around and met him at Lyons on the 30th of August.[1]

All his questions the King parried with evasions. Du Plessis pressed his point on the King of Navarre's behalf. "If she has committed a fault worthy of such an affront, he demands justice from you, as from the head of the house and father of the family. If not, Sire, he asks you, as an honourable prince, to surrender to her the slanderers upon whose reports such an insult was offered." But he succeeded in getting nothing but a promise from the King to write to his brother-in-law.

It was the general opinion that the King of Navarre would not receive his wife again without "some honourable satisfaction which would clear him in the eyes of the world." The King of France, however, was in no hurry. He went on tranquilly with his journey and his cure, and postponed all decision until his return. He was somewhat perplexed and was playing for time to get him out of an embarrassing situation. He found it dangerous to affirm the misconduct of his sister, and humiliating to recognize her innocence. Even after his entry into Paris on the 5th of October, he delayed sending "a suitable person to the King of Navarre."

Margaret was proceeding by short stages towards Gascony.

[1] Du Plessis-Mornay, vol. ii, p. 367.

The King of Navarre was perfectly aware of his brother-in-law's game: to send his wife back to his dominions and foist her upon him without any explanation or reparation. His honour and his dignity demanded that he refuse to accept a wife who had been slandered, before she had been acquitted of the charge. When she reached Jarnac on the 23rd of September, she received his order to proceed no farther. But her brother commanded her to go on, and she went to Coutras, where she stayed a month. From there she wrote her husband that she was continuing her journey "notwithstanding his command," in obedience to Henry III. Banished from France on one hand, forbidden to enter Gascony on the other, the poor creature was suffering agonies of anticipation.

The King of Navarre sent d'Aubigné to speak even more plainly to the King of France. His mission revived the disputes. Bellièvre was ordered to negotiate with the King of Navarre. His instructions were a masterpiece of deliberate equivocation. The main idea was that the Queen Mother had inspired the measures taken by the King; that they had no other object than to remove two ladies of loose morals from the Queen of Navarre's presence; that there was no question of her own virtue; and that there was no need for reparation, since no insult was offered.

In the meantime the King of Navarre was active. For three years he had been demanding the surrender of one of his towns, Mont-de-Marsan, whose Catholic population had revolted. On the night of the 20th of November he seized the place, and it was there that Bellièvre had to meet him. A poor time and spot to persuade him to accept the palpable subterfuge of the King of France.[1]

The victor demanded, as a prelude to any discussion, the

[1] Garnier, *Un scandale princier au XVI^e siècle*, p. 372.

evacuation of the garrison posted by Matignon in Bazas. Bellièvre tried to arrange it without success. Matignon strengthened his forces and the King of Navarre broke off the negotiations.

By this time he had made the question of taking back his wife include the disposal of the places of surety. Out of a personal affair he had raised an issue which affected the whole Protestant party. He was also clever enough to win Margaret's sympathies by a little timely kindness. She began to write to her mother and brother, begging them to have pity on her. But Henry III still expected the King of Navarre to receive his wife on unconditional terms.

Margaret had no illusions about the matter. She knew that her husband would take her back, but at a good price. He did not want anyone to be able to say that his wife had been forced on him, which would be obvious if he gained nothing in exchange. She wrote to Bellièvre, "it is absolutely necessary for the King my brother to furnish the King my husband with reasons for yielding."[1]

Henry III and Catherine were anxious enough to have done with the business. The Queen Mother felt that the scandal had lasted far too long; the King was still adamant on the question of apologies; but, provided his pride and dignity were spared, the withdrawal of the garrisons seemed to him of secondary importance.[2] Although he would not admit it, the activities of emissaries between the Netherlands and the south preoccupied his mind. The Duke of Anjou was slow in disarming; he had refused to come to the Assembly of Saint-Germain, suspecting that it was hostile to him. His mother, who had hastened to Château-Thierry at his request, found him in bed, burnt up with fever, and far gone in consumption.

[1] *Annales du Midi*, letter v, p. 14. [2] Garnier, p. 592.

He gave her to understand that he would be forced to sell Cambrai to the Spaniards if the King refused him the money to pay the garrison. A month later she returned to calm him. He accused Philip II and the Guises of having wished to assassinate him. He took an interest in Margaret's fate. The King of Navarre had sent Levardin to complain of the delays with Bellièvre, and to justify himself for not receiving his wife "in a borrowed house," thereby referring to the hated presence of the royal garrisons. The Court of France feared a new coalition between the two rebels. The settlement of Margaret's affairs and the withdrawal of the troops would satisfy both of them. While his ambassador was still haggling, Henry III sent him an order to have the towns evacuated.[1] Then the Duke of Anjou hastened to Paris and, throwing himself on his knees before his brother, swore that he would always be a faithful subject. The Queen Mother wept with joy to see her two sons embracing each other. It was the announcement of another reconciliation which had been delayed, she felt, only by her son-in-law and Marshal de Matignon.[2]

The King of Navarre was bearing his widower's fate with great fortitude. The fair Corisande, as he called Diane d'Andouyns, Countess of Guiche, consoled him for Margaret's absence. But the alarming news of the Duke of Anjou's health inclined him to become reconciled to the French Court. First Prince of the Blood, Heir Presumptive under the Salic Law if the Duke should die, but all the same a reconverted heretic and properly detested by the Catholic nation, it was important for him to keep on good terms with the reigning sovereign and avoid a serious break in their relations. A man who believed that a lie in the game of love or politics was a very

[1] Garnier, pp. 592-593. [2] *Lettres de Catherine*, vol. viii, p. 176.

trifling peccadillo, he wrote his wife that time weighed as heavily on him as on her.[1]

The estrangement provoked by the scandal of the King's dismissal was brought to an end by a compromise. Henry III consented to withdraw the garrisons from Agen and Condom, and to leave but fifty men in Bazas. The King of Navarre was to keep Mont-de-Marsan, and could free his houses from having royal troops in their neighbourhood. Once more the question of the places of surety was put aside.

In the last analysis, the two Kings were reconciled at Margaret's expense. Her brother had humiliated her and offered no apologies. Her husband, without insisting on clearing her honour, had accepted her, "albeit somewhat tarnished," in return for material compensations that would benefit himself and his party. Margaret came back to Navarre, after seven months' bartering, lowered in esteem, slighted, and uncertain of her future. What could she expect of a reconciliation sullied by so much cold calculation when the King of Navarre would no longer have need to abide by it?

[1] Garnier, pp. 597-598, and note 2 on p. 598.

CHAPTER NINE

OPEN REVOLT AGAINST THE TWO KINGS

HUSBAND and wife finally met at Port-Sainte-Marie on the 13th of April, and left at once for Nérac. Of what passed that evening there is only the account of a man named La Hugueye, an agent in international diplomacy then attached to the Prince of Condé. He was at least an eye-witness. "The King and Queen," he says, "arrived about four o'clock, and were alone together, walking in the gallery of the Castle of Nérac until evening. When they were at table (it was very late, and the candles were lighted), I saw this Princess weeping incessantly, and never did I see a countenance more washed with tears nor eyes redder from weeping. And much did I pity her, seeing her there seated by the King her husband, who was carrying on I know not what vain talk with his gentlemen, without speaking a word to this Princess, neither he nor any other."

Shame or anger might have prompted her tears if the King of Navarre had openly shown his contempt, or had informed her that she was to be Queen by courtesy only. It is also possible that she may have wept for joy. After eight months of torturing uncertainty, her reconciliation with her husband, such as it was, might have struck her as the greatest of good fortunes. She was no longer the wandering Princess, tossed back and forth by the conflicting wills of the two Kings; she was at least Queen of Navarre in her own domain again. Not hoping for real affection, she could still count on a certain

consideration as the daughter and sister of a king. Without doubt, she did not flatter herself that she could hold her husband, and resigned herself to the thought of sharing him with Corisande, as she had had to do with Fosseuse and so many others.

Her letters to Catherine and Henry III, written a few days after her arrival at Nérac, show her attitude plainly. "Madame, Yolet will tell you of the honour and welcome I received from the King, my lord and my friend, and the satisfaction which I feel, the which would be complete were I to know that you and my brother of Anjou were in good health." She would hardly have used the word "friend" had her husband been more than purely honorary, so to speak.

To Henry III she wrote, "Sire, I praise God for the contentment in which I find myself with the King my husband. And I pray it may be His will for this state of good will to continue." [1]

The Queen Mother had so utterly despaired of the royal household that she wanted to make sure of a lasting understanding. She drew up a manual of instruction, many pages long, on the art of retaining a husband's love and respect. She told her daughter that it was "important for princesses who are young and think themselves comely to have in attendance upon them persons of honour, both men and women, for although our own way of life brings honour or dishonour, the company that we keep serves us much for that purpose." She also advised her not to be too strict about her husband's infidelities; she was to behave as a wife should in these matters, but she should let him know that her high estate forbade her to suffer too much indignity.

One cannot feel that Catherine's advice was very wise, in

[1] Tamizey de Larroque, *Annales du Midi*, vol. ix, letters i and ii.

view of all the circumstances of the past; a compromise in morals would certainly not be the best policy for a woman whose virtue was under grave question. At this time Margaret had no real support. Her beloved brother was dying of fever. The "sad and grievous news" of a relapse transformed the joy of her return into a period of mourning and anxiety. His death on the 10th of June was for her at once a heartbreaking loss, a warning, and a threat. The leader of the Huguenot party would have had to humour the sister of the Heir Presumptive, whether he wanted to or not. But when he had gone, what account would he take of a wife whom he did not love and whom the King of France had taught him to despise? Against a husband whose overbearing selfishness she well knew and a pitiless brother Margaret's only defence was her mother, weak and cautious, who would never go the lengths of opposing the King's will.

Catherine bewailed the fact of having to see so many die before her, of losing all her children, meaning her sons, "save the one who remains, and who is yet, God be thanked, in good health." But, alas! he was childless. In this avalanche of tribulation her greatest consolation would be to see her last two children on friendly terms. "I beg of you," she wrote to Bellièvre, "tell the Queen of Navarre, my daughter, that she must not be the cause of adding to my sorrow and that she must acknowledge the King her brother as in duty bound, and do nothing to offend him." [1]

A proof of her submission was soon demanded.

Even before the death of the Duke of Anjou, the King had ordered d'Epernon, who was going south to visit his mother, to see the King of Navarre on the way. The restoration of the peace, which was always an issue in that unsettled country, was

[1] *Lettres*, vol. iii, p. 190.

sufficient reason for the meeting. But the expected demise of the heir to the throne and the recognition of his probable successor was a more urgent one. Henry III had apparently given up all hope of having children. Who would reign after him? The Salic Law decreed the First Prince of the Blood of the House of Bourbon, descended, like the Valois, from St. Louis. But this representative of dynastic law was a heretic. Ardent Catholics were organizing a League to prevent a Protestant accession. They proposed as pretender to the throne the Cardinal of Bourbon, an old man of sixty-five, and weak-minded to boot. The active chief of the League was Henry of Guise, brave like his father and beloved by the nobility and the populace of Paris and the big towns. Henry III had at heart the preservation of Catholicism, but, on the other hand, he felt himself bound by the law of succession in virtue of which he was King. It seems that he had commissioned his favourite to urge his brother-in-law to turn Catholic, a solution which would satisfy his principles, his conscience, and his authority. At one stroke he would weaken the Huguenots by the loss of their leader and would remove the only reason that justified the mobilization of the League. The King of Navarre's deputies, Clervant, du Plessis-Mornay, and Chassincourt, reported the numerous affirmations of his right to the throne. They quoted the King as saying, "Today I recognize the King of Navarre as my sole and only heir."[1]

In view of all these circumstances, the voyage of d'Epernon appears in its proper light. There was no doubt that Henry of Navarre would receive the messenger with open arms. But would Margaret consent to receive her most bitter enemy, the man she held directly responsible for her humiliation and seven months of suffering. Her husband met the

[1] Du Plessis-Mornay, vol. ii, p. 575.

favourite at Pamiers, where, "amid much heartiness and embracings," he invited him to come to Nérac.[1] Catherine trembled for fear her daughter would absent herself on the day of the visit, or would refuse to allow it at all. She charged Bellièvre to bring her to the necessary compromise of pride and spirit.

By the 7th of July, Margaret appears to be resigned to this new submission. She wrote Matignon that she had received a letter from her mother "so full of injunctions enjoining me to see Monsieur d'Epernon, with so many threats, that as I love her life and repose I am forced to obey her. I hope for her reply in six or seven days, and after that I believe I will suffer this visit. I see that she is so afflicted by our loss, that surely my fear of hurting or losing her gives me a strength I had thought beyond my powers."[2]

As a matter of fact, it was to her husband, rather than to her mother, that she yielded. The King of Navarre had given his oath that he would not force her in the matter, but he wrote to her from Pamiers that he considered the Duke his "greatest and best friend." His words were a veiled command, and Margaret had no course but to obey him, but she suffered terribly in her pride and dignity. "I see very clearly," she wrote to Bellièvre, "that I can neither flee from nor avoid the misfortune of this visit. It is not the first mortifiication nor will it be the last that will come to me from that quarter, but since my life has been reduced to the condition of slavery, I will yield to a force and power I cannot resist."[3]

D'Epernon arrived on the evening of the 4th of August, and stayed two days. His reception was such as might have been expected from a woman schooled in the niceties of Court life.

[1] Brantôme, vol. viii, p. 65.
[2] *Itinéraire*, pp. 293-294.
[3] *Annales du Midi*, vol. ix, letter xi.

The first lady-in-waiting sent news of it to Catherine, saying that the Queen of Navarre had greeted the Duke "with favour, knowing that it would please you, madame," and that the two had a long conversation together, and both seemed well content.[1] Brantôme, who enjoyed the Queen's confidence, tells more truly of her reaction. The Queen of Navarre, to please her husband, "hid her feelings in such manner that when Monsieur d'Epernon came into her chamber she received him in the very way the King had asked and she had promised to do. And so well did she play the part that the King and Monsieur d'Epernon were content; but the more sharp-sighted and those who knew the Queen's real nature, had no doubt that there was constraint within. Also she said that she had played a rôle in this comedy, sore against her will." [2]

The little drama having been carried out to everyone's satisfaction, the actors separated. D'Epernon left for Lyons to rejoin the King; Henry of Navarre went to Hagetau to meet the fair Corisande; and Margaret made a journey to Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Encontre, a famous pilgrimage centre near Agen. In the next month she proceeded to Encausse, a hot spring in the country of the Comminges, to seek from the health-giving waters the happiness of becoming a mother.

The King of Navarre seemed no longer anxious to help her in that direction. His reconciliation of the 13th of April had been neither sincere nor complete. Even before the 26th of that month he had left Nérac and journeyed to Pau. He kept away from his wife as much as possible. He returned to Nérac on the morning of August 4th for the important visit; by the 8th, he was off again. When Margaret was on her way to Encausse in September, she met him at Lectoure. There he talked to

[1] *Itinéraire*, pp. 295-296.

[2] Brantôme, vol. viii, p. 67.

her about the Assembly of Montauban, from which he was returning, to keep her properly informed of Protestant affairs for political purposes. He was on hand to welcome her at Nérac, but he did not linger. Her humble note, written after Twelfth-night, January 6, 1585, is a discreet reproach for his desertion. The festivity "might have been said to be very fine had it had the honour of your presence; for without that, nothing in my judgment can be thought agreeable." [1] But she was wasting time and trouble. For the last two years her husband had been in love with the Countess of Guiche, and so madly in love that it was said at the Court of France that the lady had bewitched him.[2]

This immoderate and public passion of the protector of the Protestant Church for a great lady of the Catholic faith troubled the Councillors of the King of Navarre and scandalized his strict comrades in arms. Clervant, Chassincourt, and Du Plessis-Mornay reminded him of the necessity for dignity, restraint, and royal bearing. But of all sacrifices, the one Henry of Bourbon would never accept was the curtailing of his pleasure.

His mistress was not of the same category as his other favourites, none of whom, save the foolish little Fosseuse, ever had any expectation of marrying him. The Countess of Guiche belonged to the cream of Gascon nobility,[3] and considered herself quite worthy to become the wife of a King of Navarre. With this hope, and even a promise, she planned to get rid of the lawful intruder. The strange and unexpected behaviour of the King of Navarre, his long absences and brief, perfunctory appearances, are surely proofs that he was the slave of

[1] *Itinéraire*, p. 310.
[2] Desjardins, vol. iv, p. 535.
[3] Frossard, *"Notice biographique sur la belle Corisande," Bulletin de la Société Ramond, 9e année, 1894.*

an autocratic will, that of a jealous mistress who forbade him the intimacies of married life for fear of a permanent reconciliation or the possibility of an heir. Rumours of the situation spread even to Paris.

It is not surprising that, humiliated in her pride as a woman and in her rights as a wife, Margaret should have lent a willing ear to the avengers who came forward. After the death of her brother, the League was recruiting soldiers and adherents to oppose the heir to the throne, now her husband. To understand how she came to declare against him, one must think of her as mad with anger, and convinced that she would be repudiated in the event of Henry III's death, and possibly even before it.

She had enemies at the Court of Navarre. The Chief Councillor, Ségur, a very subtle courtier, favoured the cause of the mistress. Turenne, freed from three years' captivity, was back at Court, more bitter than ever against the Catholics and particularly hostile to the Queen, whom he had probably never forgiven for her former rebuffs. They suspected her of being in communication with the leaders of the League, and arrested one of her servants who acted as courier. Nothing was discovered, but there was a great scandal; the King of France felt his rights had been encroached upon, and the whole affair became a diplomatic incident.

These suspicions were leading to an open break, which the jealousy of the two women precipitated. The mistress and the legitimate wife were engaged in a mortal contest, the latter exasperated by her misfortunes and resentment, the former confident of her power over her lover, and further strengthened by the past indiscretions of her rival and the possibility of future ones prompted by humilated pride. Margaret accused her of trying to poison her, and claimed that one of

her maids had "fallen very ill" of a soup prepared for herself. She also suspected Ségur of coming to Nérac to take her prisoner, and "many other designs of like nature." [1]

The King of Navarre made light of her fears as of some foolish fancies. But it is not clear that no plots were made against her. D'Aubigné declares that when she came back to Gascony after the scandal of her love affairs in Paris the Council of Navarre debated the death of the unfaithful wife.

In the light of so much hostility, Margaret seems justified in taking precautions. Was it sufficient merely to put herself under the protection of the French Court? She mistrusted her brother; she had no confidence in her mother; above all, she thirsted for vengeance on the man who was Corisande's lover. It was to her husband's enemies that she had recourse. The League was collecting arms, raising soldiers, and appealing to the great Catholic power, Spain. On the 31st of December, 1594, the Dukes of Guise and the ambassadors of Philip II drew up a Sacred Union for the defence of Catholicism. In Paris and in all the cities of the kingdom, the common people, the artisans, and the bourgeoisie, were gathering together, ready for action.

It is probable that Margaret was kept informed of the negotiations and activities. A significant fact is that she left Nérac at the beginning of Lent for Agen, a Catholic town and one belonging to her dowry. The King of Navarre let her go, without apparently noticing that she was taking a much longer time than usual for her devotions.

She might have stayed quietly in shelter at Agen, but she had other plans beyond her own security. Her trials had made her faith more dear to her; she was indignant at her husband's neglect and feared that she would be sacrificed to her

[1] *Lettres missives*, vol. ii, p. 79.

rival; she was in terror of her very life. Driven on by anger, fear, and religious sentiment, she planned to prevent the King of Navarre from becoming King of France, should her brother die. She preferred to throw away her own chances rather than see him win out with his. Wife though she was of the Heir Presumptive, she cast her lot, as if laying a wager of defiance, with his enemies.

Two days after her arrival at Agen, on the 21st of March, the Duke of Guise seized Châlons-sur-Marne. It was the signal for the Catholic uprising, and at the same time there appeared the famous manifesto of the Declaration of Péronne, postdated March 31st, "On the causes which have led the Cardinal de Bourbon and the peers, princes, lords, and Catholic cities of this Kingdom of France to oppose those who seek by every means to overturn the Catholic religion in the state." It elaborated the danger to the Church inherent in the death of a king without heir, and denounced the favourites. The attack on d'Epernon must have been extremely pleasing to Margaret.

She was well received in the town of Agen, where the year before she had established a petty Court and added to the civic prestige. The inhabitants were good Catholics, and they feared and detested the King of Navarre ever since he occupied the town in 1577. At the news of events in the north, the Councillors and the legislature considered barring their gates to him, and in expectation of another attack they decreed measures of defence. The Countess of Agen took immediate advantage of this occasion. She went to the Council and declared that, "having reason to mistrust the King of Navarre and several others of his religion," [1] she had resolved to raise two companies of foot soldiers for the security of her person.

[1] *Itinéraire*, p. 315.

Voicy Lamour du peuple & la paix de leglise
La ioye des francois la peur des estrangers
Voicy le Mars lourdy qui fouldroye de sa guyne
Laquel arme la terre et tremble les (illegible)

This was accomplished at the end of April and the troops were put under command of Ligardes and another captain, d'Aubiac, who appears for the first time in Margaret's history, destined for favour and an appalling fate.

Marshal Matignon looked upon these acts of hostility against the King of Navarre only as measures of precaution. He wrote to Henry III that he did not believe that "the said lady wished to do aught displeasing to the King of Navarre, but that she had taken refuge because she felt no surety at Nérac, knowing full well the ill will borne her by the Countess of Guiche and the power she has over the King of Navarre."[1] He dreaded an attack on Agen, and even went so far as to supply another company of artillery and foot soldiers "for the person of that lady, who finds herself sadly without means of defence."

Bellièvre, equally blind, lost time reporting to Clervant the scandal of the King of Navarre's love affair, and represented Margaret as "forced to retire to Agen to defend herself against the countess, who conspires against her life."[2]

Henry III himself was so disturbed over the "preservation" of Agen that he gave the inhabitants permission to raise troops. But he still bore his ancient grudge against his sister. No intercession could avail to make him send her the money she so urgently needed. Matignon continued to believe in her innocence, offered her more soldiers, and worried about the situation.

It was the King who finally undeceived him. From various sources the information reached him that the members of the League were counting on the support of Agen and Villeneuve d'Agenois, in other words, on Margaret herself.[3] After some

[1] Appendix to the *Lettres de Catherine,* vol. viii, pp. 431-432.
[2] *Lettres,* vol. viii, p. 435.
[3] *Lettres de Catherine,* vol. viii, p. 244 and note 1.

reflection, he ordered Matignon to go to Agen and see to it that the town should remain loyal to him.

But it was too late. Before Matignon had time to act, Margaret assembled the Council and the principal citizens, and after expressing the reasons for her mistrust, she demanded the keys of the city. It would have been dangerous to refuse her, for at the time she had two companies under arms in the town square.[1]

This was open revolt against the King, like all the other surprise attacks which gave the League possession of so many towns. It was also an attack on the municipal government. The Countess of Agen took the control of the gates away from the citizens to give it to her soldiers; she quartered in the town ten new companies she had just recruited. She organized her Court and her administration, and gave first place to those who had shared her persecutions and difficulties. Mme. de Duras became her lady-in-waiting again. She chose her husband as first gentleman of her household, appointed him commander-in-chief of the gate and bridge over the Garonne, a key position of the defences, and finally sent him on a mission to Madrid in quest of Spanish doubloons.

At the same time she wrote to her brother-in-law, the Duke of Lorraine, asking him to guarantee her a safe refuge in his estates. Her rôle was to enlarge her sphere of action around Agen and keep the valley of the Garonne open for the League. The chief of the party in Upper Auvergne, François de Lignerac, joined her with a company of gentlemen and directed their military operations.

The Queen Mother, though still unaware of the *coup d'état*, was distracted by Margaret's actions. She was afraid that her daughter would make an open break with the King of Navarre

[1] *Itinéraire*, pp. 319-320.

and that he in turn would divorce her. At Epernay, where she was treating with the Catholic party at the cost of the royal authority and the former edicts, she received the news that added materially to her "sorrows." "They tell me," she wrote, "that she has fortified Agen and maintains soldiers therein. . . . I see that God has left me this creature as punishment for my sins . . . she is my scourge in this world." [1]

To spare her son's pride, she did not name Margaret as one of the members of the League when she drew up the agreement, which was signed at Nemours on the 7th of July. Guise did not insist upon including her, because good relations between the brother and sister would be to his advantage. Catherine still hoped that Margaret would disarm, that the King of Navarre would be patient, and that some order would come out of all the chaos.

Meanwhile, the Queen of Navarre had opened hostilities against her husband. Out of consideration for Henry III, he put off taking any measures as long as he could, but the warlike lady of Agen disregarded the treaty where her name was not mentioned.

It was the policy of the Duke of Guise to have the Queen of Navarre in revolt against her husband. Some weeks after the signature of the peace of Nemours, he sent word to the Spanish ambassador in France to supply the Queen with fifty thousand crowns as part of the subsidy due to the League. He also urged Philip II to help their ally with "some goodly sum of moneys . . . for the preservation of the religion, now that we have most need of her service."

These letters proved definitely that Margaret had joined the League from its earliest beginning. She had committed herself to avenge her injuries, but instead of being a leading

[1] *Lettres*, vol. viii, p. 318.

character, she was to be only an instrument in the hands of the real leaders. She had to have money. No matter how devoted she was to the Catholic cause, she could not continue her offensive without subsidies from Spain. Philip II knew the story of her amorous career, and he judged her ill fit to be a warrior princess. He did not send her the fifty thousand crowns, and the situation of Agen was drastically altered.

At that time it was a fairly important city, larger by a third, says Scaliger, than La Rochelle, and as big as Grenoble.[1] It was rich in fine *hôtels* built by the noblemen who had driven the English from Guyenne in the Hundred Years War and in good solid houses of the middle class, like the one belonging to the widow of Pierre Cambefort, where Margaret had taken up her quarters.[2] Situated between the banks of the Garonne and a range of low hills, it was surrounded by ramparts which on one side overlooked a plain of meadows, called the Gravier. The Porte de la Garonne, at the head of a stone bridge, protected communications with the left bank and the village of Le Passage. At the other end rose the new bastions of the Porte du Pin. The Porte Neuve faced Toulouse to the east, and the Porte Saint-Georges looked west to Bordeaux. An additional gate, Porte Saint-Antoine, was an inner protection for the entry from the river.[3]

At all these entrances Margaret set companies of soldiers as guards. She strengthened the fortifications and started to build a citadel between the convent of the Jacobins and the Porte Neuve, in the highest part of the town, from which she could keep a watch on the districts outside the walls and a strict control of all within them. At the same time, to get

[1] Scaligeriana, *verbo Agen*, p. 28.
[2] *Itinéraire*, p. 368.
[3] Description of Agen in Merki, *La Reine Margot*, p. 324.

more freedom of action, she tried to seize the strongholds that abutted her territory at the four points of the compass.

Her retainers attacked Tonneins, which belonged to the King of Navarre, but were so hotly received by the garrison that "the captain, Geoffre, and his ensign were killed, and thirty or forty men fell in the square; the rest were drowned, thinking they could escape by water." They had no better success at Villeneuve-sur-Lot, a holding of the King of France; they made an attempt at Lectoure, and secured a partial victory at Saint-Mézard on the left bank of the Gers, where they armed the Catholic inhabitants.[1]

Agen was besieged, although from a distance. Margaret pressed all the works of defence. She drafted peasants to clear the moats of the old fortifications, and dig others for the new. She razed all the houses on the site of her proposed citadel, and paid no indemnity to the owners. It was the handsomest part of the city, and she had it torn to pieces, often by the labour of the very men she was ejecting.

When her income was delayed and she received no funds from Spain, she put pressure on her subjects, increased the taxes, seized the public treasuries, and raised private loans by force. She compelled the townspeople to pay for the food and upkeep of the troops. She billetted soldiers in the houses of Protestants, where they behaved as if in a conquered country, doing "all the damage they could bethink them."

Only one of the city gates was left open, and the people had great difficulty in bringing in their grain, wine, and produce of the fields. By August, famine was raging. The plague then descended on the town, spread rapidly, and in six months took a toll of fifteen or eighteen hundred lives. The Queen refused to believe in the epidemic, claiming that it was only a

[1] *Lettres missives*, p. 122.

pretence to make her leave the place. A final outrage, the demolition of eighty more houses, so incensed the poor citizens, deprived of all rights, terrified by the pestilence, and ruined by the extortions of the Queen,[1] that they sent a secret deputation to Matignon, asking authority to return Agen to "obedience" to the King of France.

The Marshal had seen many changes in his day, and he was not at all sure that Henry III might not at some time take Margaret's part again. So he decided to protect both his own future and the interests of his master. He gave "order and power" to the citizens to "take and seize the forts of the city, to drive out and expel, by force of arms if need be, the captains, soldiers, and other men of warfare," and to receive him as representative of the King. But all this was to be done, he observed, "with all the honour, respect, and very humble service due the Queen of Navarre, and without attacking any person of her suite." [2] With this reservation, he gave them permission to rid themselves of their enemies, and he waited at Tonneins, ready to intervene.

The events which followed are confused and open to conjecture. There were probably disturbances in the town, and Margaret retired to the convent of the Jacobins, which was protected by the half-completed building of the citadel. On the morning of the 25th of September there was a skirmish at the Porte du Pin, a little bloodshed, and a great deal of excitement. A band of citizens marched up to the citadel and were quickly joined by a mob. There is no record of any active assault.[3] Margaret dined, as usual, in the middle of the day. Suddenly the gunpowder stored in a part of the convent ex-

[1] *Itinéraire*, pp. 321-322.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 333-334.
[3] The letter of Joseph de Lart de Galard quoted by Lauzun, p. 336, is misdated.

ploded, tearing down some of the battlements and burying a monk and a few soldiers. Terrified at this accident, which she believed was a deliberate attempt on her life, and in despair at the thought of trying to resist both the townsfolk and Matignon, the Queen thought of nothing but flight. She left her followers, her baggage, and her Court. Mounted on a pillion behind a groom, she escaped that very afternoon to Brassac, about eight leagues from Agen. A few of her faithful ladies and gentlemen followed her.

This incident of armed resistance in Agen is not a mere episode in Margaret's life; it marks the definite break with her husband and her brother and the loss of two crowns, the one she then bore and the one she could expect as wife of the Heir Presumptive.

A life of adventure was beginning, a strange life of passions and sorrows where religion played little part. It was not the fervour of her faith, but the neglect of the King of Navarre, the machinations of Corisande, the memory of Henry III's persecutions, that drove her to join the only party which she thought had the power to avenge her on her husband, her rival, and her brother.

CHAPTER TEN

A REFUGE AND A PRISON

She started for the mountains of Auvergne, her only safe retreat, for her enemies blocked all other roads. She could at least count on a warm welcome from the Catholic nobility in the districts where Randan, a friend of Guise, was governor and François de Lignerac was bailiff. It was probably the latter who had suggested Carlat as the securest sanctuary, an impregnable fortress commanded by his brother, Marzé de Lignerac. But she had to make haste to escape Matignon, who had brought up his troops at the first report of disturbance in Agen. The forced march across hilly country, over rough roads, often mere tracks, must have been very trying for a delicate woman, obliged to ride pillion for eight or nine hours a day. On the Monday night she entered Carlat, having covered a hundred and thirty kilometres in five days.

Her train and most of the members of her household remained at Agen. The town officers, obeying to the letter the instructions of Matignon, restrained all violence and pillage; they allowed the Queen's suite to leave the city without making any payment for the damage they had inflicted. There was nothing lost or missing except some pearls which Margaret demanded, threatening to burn Agen to the ground if they were not restored to her.[1]

The removal from Agen to Carlat was a long business. The Queen's bed was sent first of all by the quickest route. Her

[1] *Itinéraire*, p. 345.

coach followed, unloaded so that it would not suffer too much from the condition of the roads. A porter who went on foot was entrusted with "several bottles of scented water." Furniture, chests, and packets were sent down the river to Port-Sainte-Marie, and then despatched on pack horses. The ladies and gentlemen took twenty days to make the journey. Finally, on the 3rd of December, the Court was reassembled at Carlat.

Of the ancient feudal castle, built on a steep bluff of volcanic rock, there remains only the site, a barren pasture-land where graze a few sheep, flanked by a wide terrace where the visitor, seated at the foot of a venerable lime tree, battered by thunderbolts and ravaged by time, may look off to the mountains of Auvergne, far on the horizon. But when the Queen took refuge there, all the battlements, later razed by Henry IV, were still standing. Ramparts enclosed the rectangle of black basalt, which fell away in a sheer drop of over a hundred feet on all sides. A growth of woods supported these cliffs, sloping down a thousand feet to the Embenne and the Restenne, two streams swollen into torrents by the autumn rains and the melting snows of spring.

The old path which led from the village of Carlat to the fortress ended in a rocky spur, the Murgat, where the first gateway opened. Ramparts, towers, a double ring of defences, unrivalled by the finest specimens of the Middle Ages, made this place most difficult of attack, while springs supplied the drinking-water necessary for withstanding a long siege.

On this summit, which ingenuity and nature had combined to make impregnable, the family of Armagnac, Viscounts of Carladais, had built barracks, a church, a convent, and two palaces. It was the favourite residence of Jacques d'Armagnac, Duke of Nemours, a great and learned nobleman, collector of manuscripts and fine illuminations. Like Margaret, he was

both devout and an intriguer; he plotted against Louis XI and lost his lands and his head in the game of politics. Later the place became the personal property of the dowager queens of France until 1582, when Henry III ceded the title of it to his sister, reserving the control of the fortress.

One historian[1] of Margaret de Valois, who cannot bear to see his heroine subjected to the discomfort of poor surroundings, would have it that the fugitive found the palace in the same state of conservation and luxury it had boasted some fifty years before. But the dowager queens had stopped living in this castle lost in the mountains of distant Auvergne, and would no longer pay for its upkeep. Here also appeared the results of the civil war. The fortress had been taken and retaken by Catholics and Protestants. Soldiers had camped on the battlements and had transformed the convent, chapel, and halls into barracks and guard-rooms.

With the possible exception of the governor's apartment, the walls held no trace of their former splendour. Tapestries, books, furniture, and carvings had all disappeared. Though it was not the "robbers' cave" described in the *Divorce Satyrique,* it was hardly the Palace of the Sleeping Beauty.

Margaret could not find even a little table for her bedside.[2] She sent for an artisan of Aurillac "to fit glass in the windows of her chamber and closet." The fittings had to be removed, and the old tapestries brought from Agen used to cover the bare walls. The chapel was open to the weather, and stripped of ornament. The furniture, linen, and comforts of her house in Agen served to make the place tolerably habitable.

As one might guess, the cellars were empty. Margaret ordered wines from the Bordeaux districts, and took it for

[1] Saint-Poncy, vol. ii, pp. 226, 229 ff.
[2] Sage et Comte de Dienne, vol. ii, intro., p. 336.

granted that her husband would give the shipment free passage to Carlat. But he was not so gallant as she expected, and boasted of the incident in a letter to Corisande. "A man has come to me," he wrote on the 7th of December, "from *la dame aux chameaux,* asking me to give passport to five hundred tuns of wine. This indeed is a written declaration of drunkenness. For fear she might fall from her lofty mount, I refused her. She would be a spouting gargoyle in all verity." [1]

Money was soon lacking in her establishment. Duras had come back empty-handed from Spain. Choisnin returned from his mission to the Duke of Guise, expecting some substantial remuneration for his services. The best proof of a shortage of funds is that she offered to sign him a grant of six thousand crowns, but Choisnin, unwilling to accept a mere promissory note, demanded immediate payment. She refused one day to see him; he struck the servant who barred the door to him. Then she dismissed him. He left the castle complaining in "shameful terms" of her conduct, whereupon her servants fell on him and beat him severely. In his wrath he went to Henry III and laid before him the Queen's letters to the Duke of Guise and the instructions she had unwisely left in his hands.

Catherine was doubtless well aware of the situation, anyhow. Her daughter's flight and descent upon Carlat increased her anxieties. She offered her one of her own castles in Auvergne as a retreat. Was it for her, a woman, to make war? Margaret replied that she had a right to defend herself. To escape the power of those who had wanted to take away her property, life, and honour, she had retired to a very good place, accompanied by many persons of honour, and there she

[1] *Lettres missives,* vol. ii, p. 153.

was living in high esteem and complete safety.[1] She wanted no other refuge.

Her feeling of security and her pride in her successful flight could not for long counterbalance the gloom and emptiness of the days spent in the lonely fortress. There in the heights of Auvergne, the winters were long and very severe. The memory of the sad fate of Jacques d'Armagnac must have further darkened that sombre place. Although Margaret gave the impression of having robust health, she was not really very strong and was subject to colds and rheumatism. In February she fell ill, and in March her condition was so alarming that her physicians called in consultants and one very well-known doctor who lodged in the village for forty days.

A rumour reached the Court of France that she was dead;[2] but she had only narrowly escaped death. Catherine was tempted to remove her daughter from the harsh climate and from the influences of the League, both of which were endangering her life in one way or another. Cavriana, the agent of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, wrote his master in April, 1586: "The Queen of Navarre will change her place of abode, and it is believed that she will come to a palace of the Queen Mother called Chenonceaux, where they will set about arranging terms of peace."[3]

The reference is to a negotiation with the King of Navarre. Catherine dreaded the war to the death proclaimed by the League. More than ever she wanted to convert her son-in-law or at least secure some kind of neutrality. A reconciliation between husband and wife would serve as an opening wedge. And it was necessary for Margaret to give a token of her willingness by leaving the fastness of Carlat.

[1] Lauzun, *Lettres inédites*, letter xxxiv.
[2] Brantôme, ed. Lalanne, vol. viii, p. 40.
[3] Desjardins, vol. iii, p. 640.

The Court of France undoubtedly had peaceable intentions, which might have borne some fruit had not a new cause of disagreement broken out. In spite of all her learning, Margaret was the impulsive slave of her emotions. Even age did not bring her tranquillity. At this time she was just thirty-three. She was still a beautiful woman, a little heavy of figure, but still infinitely desirable. Lignerac, the bailiff of the mountain districts, felt he had a claim on her favour because he had served her well and saved her from the pursuit of Matignon. Mistaken psychology. Margaret took pleasure in giving where she owed nothing, it revolted her to pay her debts in coin of love. In the loneliness and extreme quiet of her new life she was liable to pick out some one of her servants on whom in happier days she would not have bestowed the least passing attention. She apparently gave her affections to the son of the apothecary, a young man who had cared for her during her illness. The slighted nobleman was roused to fury by her choice. Mendoza, the Spanish ambassador, did not invent the tragic news he reported to his King on the 19th of July, 1586: "I hear it said that the Queen Mother has lately been lamenting with Silvio that Monsieur de Lignerac had stabbed to death the son of an apothecary in the bedchamber of the Princess of Béarn.[1] So close to her bed was it that she was all stained with blood, and they say that this was done through jealousy, which makes the matter worse." [2]

After this fresh scandal, Catherine could hardly ask the King of Navarre to take back his wife, nor could she have Margaret join her at Chenonceaux.

On all sides was talk of warfare. Henry III was resigned to opposing the Huguenots under the terms of the Holy Alli-

[1] The Spanish government, considering that Navarre belonged to the Crown, would give only the title of Prince of Béarn.

[2] Text quoted by Lauzun, *Itinéraire*, p. 351, with corrections.

ance, but he intended to accomplish the ends of the League without entrusting high command to its leaders. Of the three armies marching against the King of Navarre and his ally, Montmorency-Damville, he refused to give command of any to the Duke of Guise. The Duke of Joyeuse, Admiral of France, became commander-in-chief of the expedition.

Carlat was a key position for the invading armies. Henry III resolved to force his sister to leave the fortress. It is probable that the governor, Marzé de Lignerac, was ready to acknowledge the complete royal authority, but he died in the late summer, after indefinite negotiations.

The moment seemed favorable for Margaret to make herself mistress of Carlat. She was no longer content to stay there under the protection of a handful of soldiers and subject to the insane jealousy of de Lignerac or the chance of attack from the King's troops. She wanted, by repeating the experiment of Agen, to make herself obeyed within and without. She despatched a man to recruit men for her in Quercy and Rouergue. She planned to give the command of her forces to d'Aubiac, her old captain at Agen and more recently her equerry. She was madly in love with him, for she knew no half measures in affection. On his side, he is said to have exclaimed the first time he saw her that he wanted "to sleep with her, though it might mean a hanging afterward." [1]

The *Divorce Satyrique* represents him as a "rough groom, ruddy and more speckled than a trout, whose red nose would never have given promise in a mirror of one day being found in the bed of a daughter of France." [2] On the other hand, Cavriana paints him as a "fine, handsome stripling, but insolent and indiscreet, though brave and warm-hearted." [3] In

[1] Réaume, *Divorce Satyrique*, vol. ii, p. 671.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 669.
[3] Desjardins, vol. iv, p. 669.

reality, he was neither stable boy nor nobleman, but a younger son of a respectable family. The favour of a royal heart raised him to distinction and destined him for great services.

Lignerac did not intend to be excluded from Marzé's succession. In default of the King, it was his right and not Margaret's to dispose of Carlat. He made his way into the fortress, apparently without opposition, and assumed the tone of master of the situation. He told the Queen that "d'Aubiac must leap the rock." Her only thought was to save her lover, and by prayers and "other means" she obtained his pardon. But it was on condition that he leave the place on the instant.

Henri de Noailles recounts the whole affair as a farce, adding, "she would rather go away and change her abode than abide here without him." [1] He has no word of pity for the woman who threw away her security, honour, and future for the sake of love, who left the refuge of Carlat at the risk of being captured by either the Protestant or the royal troops, who was humiliated, despoiled, who perhaps even gave herself to save her lover. She forgot that she was a queen, and Noailles forgets that she is a woman.

Catherine asserts that she left Carlat of her own free will, for reasons she is careful not to state. Cavriana wrote the Grand Duke that it was "certain that the King was the cause of the flight of the Queen of Navarre." Brantôme gives the same explanation. But in truth, Henry III had had more good luck than good management. Help came from a source he had least expected it, from a member of the League. He had probably planned to surround the fortress and there capture Margaret and her lover. The drama of passions had hastened the climax.

[1] Tamizey de Larroque, *Revue des questions historiques,* vol. viii, January, 1870, p. 263.

Any explanation other than that of the heart should be discredited. It would never have occurred to Margaret, a sensible woman "in all save love," to leave the safety of Carlat for the plains of Lower Auvergne, ravaged by famine and disease after the retreat of Joyeuse's armies. It was only the desire to follow d'Aubiac which sent her forth over the mountains and through the valleys.

Lignerac did not hesitate to take every advantage of the fugitive princess. To regain the ten or eighteen hundred pounds he had lent her, he seized her purse and her jewels.[1] After this settling of accounts, the gallant gentleman escorted the little band which was starting on its hazardous journey, d'Aubiac, with his royal mistress riding pillion behind him, and the Queen's gentlemen and ladies following after, some on foot, some on horseback.

Margaret left on the morning of the 14th of October, and followed the rough roads circling the plateaus. The way led through lonely country infested with bandits and deserters from both armies. At one time she seems to have dismounted and walked with d'Aubiac and a maid, later she was mounted on a draught horse, and then travelled some of the way in a bullock cart. She avoided Issoire, where there was a royal garrison, forded the river Allier in the dead of night, and reached Ibois on the 17th in a state of exhaustion.

Meanwhile the Marquis of Canillac, one of Joyeuse's lieutenants, was returning to his estates in Auvergne after the campaign of the Gévaudan, perfectly well aware of the King's displeasure towards his sister.[2] As soon as he heard that she had taken the Limagne road, he rushed to the pursuit with forty or fifty gentlemen, and made such speed that he reached Ibois very shortly after she did. There he blockaded her in the

[1] *Itinéraire*, p. 354. [2] Noailles says that he had orders to arrest her.

castle. The retreat Catherine had offered her daughter became a prison, with the jailer guarding the door.

In her first despair, Margaret thought of dying, arms in hand. She wrote M. de Sarlan, Catherine's steward, "I wish at least before I die to have the Queen, my mother, know that I had the courage not to fall alive into the hands of my enemies."[1] Once before, on her expulsion from Paris, she had seriously contemplated death. But on this occasion, also, she preferred to live. After a little futile resistance, having neither provisions nor soldiers, she surrendered on the fifth day.[2] She hoped that d'Aubiac, shaven and disguised, might escape without being recognized. When the ruse failed to deceive the watch, she hid him in one of the dungeon cells. Canillac threatened to tear down the castle stone by stone to find him. Margaret wept and wailed; she tore her hair and screamed with hatred against Lignerac; in the end she had to give up her lover.

The Marquis immediately sent a messenger to Catherine to inform her of his double capture. The Queen Mother received the tidings with heartless delight. She had been disgusted that the wife of the King of Navarre, the sister of the King of France, should have been so physically infatuated that she was willing to undergo the disgrace of an unconcealed intimacy with a member of the lesser nobility. With great satisfaction she sent on to the King the bearer of the welcome news, and asked Villeroy to pay all the expenses of the journey.

Canillac had separated the lovers. He had d'Aubiac confined at Saint-Cirgues, and took Margaret under a strong guard to the castle of Saint-Amand-Tallende, on the left bank of the Allier. Two weeks later he transferred her to Saint-Saturnin to await instructions from the King. These he must

[1] Guessard, pp. 279-298. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 293.

have received on the 8th of November, since that is the date of his reply to Villeroy, thanking the King for his letter of congratulation. He was commanded to conduct the Queen of Navarre to Usson, and there to keep her in confinement. On the 13th of November he brought his royal prisoner into this fortress with the triple lines of defence which Louis XI, a good judge in such matters, pronounced the first of state prisons, more strongly enclosed and more secure than Loches, Vincennes, or Lusignan. Henry III set the day after Twelfth-night, the 7th of January, 1587, for his final decision on his sister's fate.

The reason for this long delay was the prospect of a new negotiation with the King of Navarre. The fate of Margaret was inextricably bound up in this conference. Meanwhile, Henry III ordered the officers of his exchequer to arrange for the payment of fifty or a hundred Swiss soldiers to guard the prisoner, and he recommended that they be chosen from among the "most faithful."

He hesitated a little before condemning d'Aubiac. If he had him executed in Margaret's presence, it would serve to confirm their intimacy and would provide the King of Navarre with grounds for divorcing his wife on charge of adultery. In the end the wretched man's death was contrived on the trumped-up excuse of his having poisoned Marzé de Lignerac. He was dragged to the frontier of Auvergne and executed at Aigueperse. Although he was of gentle birth, he was not beheaded. He was strung up by his heels like a rogue, and thrown half dead into a ditch dug beneath the gallows.

At Saint-Brice, where the King of Navarre had at length agreed to meet Catherine, Margaret's very life hung in the balance. The Queen Mother was so anxious to secure the conversion of the heir to the throne as the only means of safe-

guarding the peace of the Kingdom and as the most effective blow against Huguenot power, that she was determined on all and any concessions. She offered the King of Navarre a chance to break his marriage contract, and offered to rewed him to Christine of Lorraine, daughter of the Duke of Lorraine.

The annulment of the marriage, which would have to have the Pope's consent, was a long and dubious business. The death of the prisoner of Usson would solve everything. The French Court took more interest than usual in the state of Margaret's health, and awaited impatiently the couriers and messages from Auvergne. Cavriana reports the rumours and sombre suspicions that were current; in one letter he says, "If I were to repeat all that is being said, Sire, it would indeed be *materia tragica.*"[1]

Catherine had brought Christine of Lorraine with her to show Henry of Navarre the wife she was planning for him as the price of his conversion. Margaret was considered as one already dead. She was known to be seriously ill, and it was convenient to believe that she would not recover. If she persisted in living, what could be done with her? There was talk of cloistering her as a nun for the rest of her life, or perhaps even worse.[2] Marshal de Retz bears witness that some such proposals were made to the King of Navarre, who replied that he "would never consent to such an execrable misdeed."

Guise speaks in a letter to the Spanish ambassador of the "tragic designs" surrounding the death of Margaret, "the details of which would make the hair of your head stand up."[3] The death warrant of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland, in

[1] Desjardins, vol. iii, p. 666. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 664.
[3] Guise to Mendoza, *Mémoires* of La Huquerye, vol. ii, p. 277.

September, 1586, was sad enough. L'Estoile was surely thinking of another unfortunate queen when he wrote of Mary Stuart in December, 1586: "This poor Queen has a good right to say, like the other one, 'Alas! the League I have so dearly loved is bringing me to my death.'"[1]

Margaret was so terrified at the thought of being poisoned that she formed the habit, and held to it all the rest of her life, of having each one of her women taste every dish that was set before her.[2] Scipion Du Pleix ascribes all the nervousness of the last and most peaceful years of her life to the agonies she suffered in the early days of her imprisonment at Usson.

The scandal of the whole situation was terrific. Margaret had proclaimed to all the world her infatuation for a man of simple birth. She had fled from Carlat to follow him, and the madness of such a course led to suspicions that the love affair might have the same unhappy consequences as the King of Navarre's intimacy with Fosseuse. In view of the position she occupied in Christendom, as wife of the King of Navarre, sister of the King of France, and aunt of the Princesses of Lorraine and the Infantas of Spain, one of whom had just married the Duke of Savoy, the sordid indiscretions of her misconduct tarnished the escutcheons of three great reigning houses. How shameful it all was, and how easy to understand Henry III's anger and his wish to see the "miserable creature" dead.

But Margaret did not die, and she may have exaggerated the danger of the moment. Only the Queen Mother's incurable optimism could have imagined that the King of Navarre would renounce his faith and betray his party for the mere promise of a divorce and a remarriage. He was far too shrewd a politician and too suspicious a person to trust himself to

[1] L'Estoile, vol. ii, p. 364. [2] Scaligeriana, *verbo Queen of Navarre.*

Henry III, whose feebleness, impotence, and fickleness he thoroughly appreciated. Catherine realized that he only wanted to prolong negotiations to allow time for the arrival of a new German army. The King of France slowly reversed his feelings about the prisoner of Usson. If the King of Navarre persisted in his heresy, it was better for his wife to live and prevent his remarrying and strengthening his party by a new family alliance.

In January, 1587, Henry III decreed the fate of his sister. She was to be spared her life, but she was to remain a prisoner. Circumstances and her own charms were to mitigate this harsh sentence, however.

The Marquis of Canillac was growing weary of waiting for the reward he expected in token of his services to the Crown. He had received one letter of congratulation, and a tardy one at that. After Margaret had been safely installed in Usson, the King had apparently dismissed the subject from his mind. Catherine urged him to give some recompense to the Marquis, but the King turned a deaf ear to all her advice.

Finally, disappointed in his hopes and hurt by the King's indifference, Canillac began to feel the odium of his rôle—the tool for his master's unpleasant tasks and the jailer of an unhappy queen. At the same time he ran the risk of an attack from the Duke of Guise, who could not abandon Margaret to her fate.

His prisoner knew how to take best advantage of his anger and anxiety. Possessed of one of the smoothest tongues in France, she had no difficulty in persuading him that he had nothing to gain and all to lose from keeping her in custody. His change of heart was sudden and complete. He dismissed the Swiss guards chosen by Matignon and put himself under the orders of the woman who should have remained his pris-

oner. He approached Randan and let it be known to the Duke of Guise that he was ready to support the League.

Catherine could hardly believe the amazing news. She wrote frantic letters in all directions, even to her daughter, but to no avail. The Marquis "swore and promised to set the Queen of Navarre at liberty, and to establish her in a safe place."

His defection is explained by resentment and self-interest. But contemporaries suspected a more powerful motive. D'Aubigné hints at his listening only too gladly to the blandishments of the fair lady. Pierre Matthieu says that "the glimpse of the ivory of her arm melted him, and thereafter he lived only for the favour of the bright eyes of his beautiful captive."

Love must have turned the tables. It is not surprising that Canillac, then nearing fifty, should have succumbed to the charms of one of the most beguiling women of the age. True, he received other rewards from the leaders of the League. He died as commander-in-chief of artillery to the Duke of Mayenne, the acknowledged head of the League after the murder of the Duke of Guise at Blois. But neither his disappointments at the hands of the King of France, nor the hope of reward from the Catholic party, would have been a strong enough motive to make him desert the service of his King. A more potent passion was at work. No document contradicts his liking for the captive Princess. The chronicler of the *dames gallantes* confirms it.

At the first news of her faithful servant's backsliding, Catherine begged her daughter to return to God and remember her high birth. It seems to imply that she dared not, for the sake of Margaret's honour, learn the price that was paid for his betrayal of trust.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE YEARS WITH THE LEAGUE

AT LAST she was free, by grace of the League, and for the time at least, under the protection of Canillac. From prisoner she became châtelaine and later sovereign mistress of the fortress where her brother had planned to keep her forever in captivity. After so many journeys, trials, and dangers, she had found refuge. Willy-nilly, there she lived for nineteen years.

Abroad everything was in disorder. The leaders of the League demanded a strict adherence to the Edict of October, which revoked all the edicts of tolerance. Catherine went to treat with them at Rheims, but after the conference of Saint-Brice, where they felt she had been negotiating with her son-in-law at their expense, she was no longer qualified to moderate their demands. Despairing of his mother's diplomacy, Henry III decided to take matters into his own hands. He despatched Joyeuse against the King of Navarre, charged the Duke of Guise to block the entry of the German army, and established himself on the Loire to defend the river and prevent his enemies from uniting forces. He expected that the favourite would rout the armies of the Huguenots in the south, and that the Duke of Guise would have his hands full with attacking the *reiters*. Then he could intervene, with his forces still intact, and could impose his will everywhere.

But Joyeuse was defeated by the King of Navarre and killed at Coutras on the 20th of October, 1587, and Guise scattered

the invaders at Auneau and Vimory. The King was as much put out by the success of one as by the defeat of the other. He had no course but to recognize and commend the victory over the Germans. The members of the League immediately increased their demands; they required the taxes on the new places of safety, the dismissal of d'Epernon, the establishment of the Inquisition, confiscation of Huguenot property, heavy taxes on all suspects, and sentence of death on all Protestants engaged in warfare who refused to live thereafter in the Catholic faith.

The weakness of Henry III and the growing power of the Catholic party were the best safeguards for Margaret. Catherine began to find her a little too well protected. She may have feared that, in the event of fresh troubles, she would take up arms again. It was probably to deprive her of the desire and the means of doing so that she wanted to have her near her. At her request Henry III would have countenanced the arrangement, and Margaret herself must have been tired of her seclusion on the edge of the sombre mountain country. Cavriana is the only witness of this attempt at family unity, but he is more reliable than most of his contemporaries. In May, 1588, he wrote to the Secretary of State in Florence that the Queen of Navarre was about to "return to these parts, either to Villers-Cotterets or to her own domain of La Fère; and this is with the approval of the King, to whose kindness she has trusted her future without reserve."[1] The very day after this despatch, however, the Duke of Guise arrived in Paris. It was the day of the Barricades, the flight of the King, and the triumph of the militant Catholics.

Catherine remained in Paris to try to reconcile her son and the League. It was certainly not the moment for Margaret

[1] Desjardins, vol. iv, p. 778.

to leave Auvergne. Where indeed could she have gone? Henry III could pardon the revolt, but he could not forget the outrage to his pride and he refused to reënter his capital. He wandered from Chartres to Rouen, and from Rouen to Chartres, before retiring to Blois, where he called the Estates-General. His sister was likely to receive a cold welcome when her presence would remind the King of all his embarrassments. The Queen Mother had too much on her mind to bother with her daughter. It is also possible that the Duke of Guise may have opposed a reunion which would restore Usson to the power of the King.

In the insecurity of the day and the uncertainty of the morrow, this refuge was all that remained to Margaret. And she had to make sure of it. She commanded Canillac, who was there in command; she was mistress of his heart and through him of the castle; it was a sort of occupation by proxy, and the obligations might soon have to be fulfilled. As at Agen and Carlat, she wanted to be independent. She mistrusted Henry III and she may have grown tired of Canillac.

The *Divorce Satyrique* relates the terms on which she freed herself of her liberator. She promised him her house in Paris, and land to the value of more than two thousand pounds' income. But she probably found that he thought himself quite sufficiently rewarded by her gratitude and smiles. She countermanded her order granting the land, and managed to keep Canillac "in expectation and hope of obtaining from her all that he could desire."[1] Her final method of settling accounts was to cede to him all the estates she was to inherit from her mother, and she promised to pay him a lump sum at some future time.

It was at Usson, where she was no longer dependent on

[1] Réaume, vol. ii, p. 672.

anyone, that she heard of the tragedy of Blois, and, after the assassination of the Duke of Guise, of the death of her mother. Catherine's will, signed under pressure from the King, disinherited Margaret completely and left her not even a souvenir or expression of affection. By letters patent, dated June 1, 1589, Henry III ratified the will. All sentiment aside, it was legal enough; Catherine left all her property to her granddaughter, Christine of Lorraine, and to her grandson, Charles of Valois, the illegitimate son of Charles IX. Canillac was not to receive much from the maternal inheritance!

The news of the murder of the Guises had aroused the people of Paris. The League took a distinctly revolutionary turn. The Duke of Aumale, a cousin of the deceased Princes, was made Governor of Paris. The escutcheons of the King were torn down and his statues mutilated. The Sorbonne released its students from the oath of allegiance. Preachers pronounced from the pulpit that the Church and the people had a right to depose a King who was the enemy of justice and religion. Mayenne was made Lieutenant of the Estate and Crown of France, as if the throne were already empty. Almost all the large cities followed in the lead of Paris. In Auvergne, only Clermont remained loyal to the Crown. But in the agreements and documents there is no mention of Margaret.

In spite of lack of evidence, historians have maintained that even during Henry III's lifetime she took up arms for the League and opposed him. But she had no means to defray the expense of a rebellion, for the villagers of Usson were not, like the townsfolk of Agen, rich material to exploit. Besides, she had little to gain from the ruin of the dynasty. Her wisest course was to keep on good terms with everyone, and hold communication with both camps.

Henry III, in despair at the loss of all his important cities

and at the hostility of most of the nobility, called the leader of the Protestant party to his aid. This amounted to recognizing him as Heir Presumptive and nullifying all the decisions that the Pope, the Estates, and he himself had formerly made. The future looked very threatening to Margaret.

The transactions of Saint-Brice were still recent history. And she knew that after the assassination of the Duke of Guise the King of Navarre had written to his fair Corisande: "I only await the hour when I shall hear that some one has strangled the late Queen of Navarre. This, following on her mother's death, would set me singing the canticle of Simeon." After an interview with Henry III he also wrote: "The King spoke to me of the lady in Auvergne; I think that I will give her an unpleasant shock." [1]

And then Henry III was assassinated before Paris, which he was besieging, and the King of Navarre succeeded him.

The League was roused to fresh energies to oppose the heretic whom the Salic Law called to the throne. Even the great Catholic lords of the royal army proclaimed him only on the promise that he would see reason in six months, that is to say, would abjure his faith. In both camps the rights of religion overbalanced the rights of succession.

Margaret found it difficult to declare herself for either faction as she weighed the reasons pro and con. What good would it do her to acknowledge a King who no longer recognized her as his wife, or yet what would she gain by fighting against a husband whose accession made her Queen of France? Historians who take into consideration only her hatred and desire for revenge have come to the conclusion that she waged a rough but intensive warfare against him. Two of her eulogists picture her as a warrior maiden, at the head

[1] Dussieux, p. 111.

of the League, taking her position on horseback in the thick of things.[1] But there is no definite evidence to support their claims. She did not rush to her husband's support, and he probably did not want her at the moment. The time for their reconciliation by means of a divorce was not yet at hand. Vernyes, in his account, mentions Usson, "which the Queen holds,"[2] as among the fortresses and towns that were hostile to the new king in 1589. But Margaret had not the means of making war on her husband, and perhaps she had not the desire to do so. One gets the impression that she buried herself in the fortress.

Only a few miles from her refuge, at Cros-Rolland north of Issoire, the Leaguers and Royalists fought a pitched battle for the control of the province. If wind and weather were favourable that day, the lady of Usson might have watched from her donjon keep the movement of troops, the flash of arms, and might have heard the shots and cannonades. Issoire was the prize to be won, and a prize of great value. "In a civil war, whosoever is master of this town holds sway over a vast stretch of country and levies at his pleasure moneys from its rents."[3]

The Royalists had taken the town by storm and were besieging the citadel. Randan came up to relieve one and recapture the other. In his turn Curton rushed up with all his following of vassals and the Royalist nobility of Auvergne and the neighbouring provinces.

Curton was simply a brave soldier, like Randan, but he had as his lieutenant a clever strategist, Rastignac, who handled the operations so skilfully that he forced his adversaries to retire from Issoire and from the heights above Cros-Rolland.

[1] Imberdis, p. 359. Saint-Poncy, vol. ii, p. 333.
[2] Vernyes, p. 21.
[3] Palma Cayet, *Chronologie Novenaire*, p. 239.

The battle in the plain was confused and brief. The poor generalship of the leader of the League, the heavy fire of the royal artillery and gunners, and a furious cavalry charge won the day. Randan and a hundred and twenty noblemen were killed or mortally wounded. The victors lost but three persons of quality. The garrison of the citadel surrendered.[1]

The victory of Cros-Rolland was as important as that of Ivry, won on the same day, the 14th of March, 1590. The League in Auvergne did not recover from this spilling of noble blood, and was forced to call in outside help.

Nothing is known of the Queen of Navarre's feelings at the sight of this battle fought before her eyes and, so to speak, at her very threshold. The thought of her own safety kept her from sending out into the fray the handful of Swiss soldiers she retained to guard the castle. But at least one may suppose that Randan's defeat affected her painfully.

The vanquished Leaguers appointed Canillac, the son of Margaret's liberator, to succeed Randan. Anne d'Urfé, the Lieutenant-General in Forez, made some attempts to restore the League's prestige, and finally concluded a truce with the Royalists which was intended to last until April, 1591.

During this interval there was apparently a mutiny at Usson, from which Margaret emerged victorious "by a miracle." The *Divorce Satyrique* attributes it to some soldiers supplied by the Duke of Orléans. A despatch from the municipality of Le Puy describes an attempt "to kill the Queen of Navarre by pistol-shot in her very chamber." It adds that the ball was imbedded in her Majesty's robes and that "the tragedy was conducted by the captain of the guard."[2]

All that one can conclude from the letter of the sheriffs of

[1] Palma Cayet, pp. 240-243.

[2] Archives Municipales de Lyons, *Correspondence Consulaire*, AA 74, 15 Janvier, 1591.

Le Puy is that in January, 1591, Margaret was considered as hostile to Henry IV. But she had no money to levy and support troops. The revenues of the Castle of Usson barely provided for her personal needs and the upkeep of a tiny garrison. She had not received a penny of her income from Picardy and Vendôme since her break with her husband. "Although that stronghold," says Hilarion de Coste, "feared only the fall of the heavens, though only the sun could force an entrance there, though the great walls could scorn any attack like a rock rising above the waves and tides, still grim necessity sometimes entered in." [1] The mistress of the castle was forced, "to avoid mutinies, to pawn her jewels in Venice, to have her silver melted down." Without the help of Elizabeth of Austria, the widow of Charles IX, who generously granted her the better part of the funds from her dowry, she would have suffered actual want.

In view of the real situation, it is foolish to suppose for one moment that there was any thought of putting Margaret forward as claimant to the throne in defiance of the Salic Law. If that law was to be abrogated, the children of her older sisters would have more right to the throne than she, and all of them had the means to push their claims if the chance offered. The League had, by a sort of compromise, proclaimed as King a Catholic Bourbon, the aged cardinal, paternal uncle of Henry of Navarre, thereby asserting that the only reason for excluding him was on the score of heresy.

Margaret might have drawn some satisfaction out of her husband's defeat, but she had nothing material to gain by it. If he were vanquished, she would probably have great difficulty in getting her share of the division of spoils. If he were victorious, he would doubtless try to break off his marriage with

[1] Hilarion de Coste, vol. ii, p. 302.

her so that he could take a wife who would give him legitimate children to carry on the dynasty. Here Margaret would hold the trump cards. Sterility and even adultery were not invalidating causes in canon law. She alone could say that her mother and her brother had forced her into marriage, against her conscience and against her wishes, with the King of Navarre, a Protestant. She would make such a statement only on the day when it suited her purposes.

It would have been most imprudent to antagonize the possible victor of the morrow when she could foresee a settlement. All her efforts should be directed against a sudden attack from the Royalists and the danger of imprisonment. While awaiting the hour of negotiations, the important thing was to remain at liberty.

After the victory of Cros-Rolland, Henry IV decided to place all the royal forces in Auvergne under one man. On the advice of Vernyes, he chose as Governor of Upper and Lower Auvergne, Charles of Valois, the bastard son of Charles IX and Marie Touchet, then only seventeen years old. Catherine had loved this little grandson, the only child of any of her sons, and to him she had left the inheritance that should have been Margaret's. He was a brave lad and had conducted himself so well at Arques that he won the heart of the new King. Henry IV doubtless thought that it would be wise to place a man in the neighbourhood of Usson who would have very strong reasons for keeping a close watch on the royal mistress. Besides, by raising a mere boy to such high estate, he could feel assured of his loyalty and gratitude.

A month after the appointment, he extended his powers over the districts of Lyons, Forez, Bourbonnais, and Upper and Lower Marche. It amounted to a territory as large as

that which the Duke of Nemours claimed in the name of the League. Thus was the King pitting an illegitimate Valois against the brother of the Duke of Mayenne, strength for strength and prestige for prestige. But he was also running the risk of tempting his young favourite too far by this unprecedented concentration of power.

Chance had reassembled around Charles of Valois some of the old servitors of the Duke of Anjou, that brother so specially loved by Margaret. The most prominent was the famous La Fin La Nocle, the wily *agent d'intrigues*. After the Duke's death he had vacillated between the King of France and the King of Navarre until their union removed the necessity of choice. Possessed of vast estates in Auvergne and a bitter enemy of the Canillac family, he had attached himself to the young Governor in the hope of directing him.

Margaret had need to know the attitude of the new Governor. She seized the first opportunity to renew her connection with La Fin, whose birth put him above the other Councillors. She was trying to establish friendly terms with her nephew-by-the-left-hand, and it is supposed, not without probability but without proof, that she would have bestowed on him voluntarily the inheritance from her mother, "with reserve of a certain right of enjoyment." [1] Charles of Valois had been ill, and this devoted aunt, whom no one would have expected of being so sympathetic, wrote to La Fin that he had relieved her of a "great distress" by sending her good news "of the health of him whom I hold dear above all the world." [2] She was exaggerating her affection just as she was exaggerating the compliments she bestowed on La Fin.

He returned compliment for compliment, but though he

[1] Saint-Poncy, vol. ii, p. 396. [2] Cohendy, p. 197.

was profuse in his language, he was sparing of promises and pledges. He knew that Charles of Valois would not strip himself of his heritage. Just as if Catherine de' Medici had not disposed of the property in her will, Margaret sold the two estates of Cremps and Busséol to one of her ladies-in-waiting. Perhaps she expected her nephew to turn over the property, and his generosity might serve as an opening wedge for more readjustment of the inheritance. But in this case she had to understand that her affection was not great enough compensation for so handsome a present. The nephew kept the estates of Cremps and Busséol until the day when Parliament broke the will of Catherine de' Medici.

In the meantime Charles of Valois continued to spin intrigues. In the memorandum which Vernyes addressed to the King in 1593 he cited among the different parties formed in Auvergne that of the Count of Clermont. To put a stop to his ambitious scheming, Henry IV took La Fin into his service and sent him on missions to Auvergne and Languedoc.

Margaret enjoyed this quarrel from the point of view of a spectator. She also had the pleasure of seeing the break between her husband and the fair Corisande, the ambitious and jealous mistress who had ruined her own matrimonial arrangement. Henry IV had loved her a long time, and even when he deceived her he continued to write her passionate letters. In May, 1590, he still professed to love her, saying, "my heart, I will kiss your hands, your lips, your eyes a million times over"; but at the same time he was seeking the favours of Antoinette de Pons, a young widow, whom he also offered to marry as soon as he should get a divorce from Margaret.

When Corisande decided a little later, perhaps in anger, to marry Catherine of Navarre to the Count of Soissons, the King

was very much displeased. He feared another alliance between a Catholic and a Protestant Bourbon and told his mistress harshly that he would never forgive "any persons" who tried to come between him and his sister.[1] Thus ended the intimacy of ten years' standing. Margaret was well avenged.

[1] Dussieux, pp. 168-169.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE DIVORCE AND "SECOND MARRIAGE" OF HENRY IV

THE disgrace of Corisande, the intrigues of the Count of Auvergne, and anxiety for the future had the unexpected result of reconciling the husband and wife who might have been thought mortal enemies. The same historians who like to represent Margaret as the master mind directing the League in Auvergne, look upon this renewed sympathy as a miracle, like the King's abjuration of the Protestant faith. But in neither case was there anything extraordinary. Lukewarm in his old faith, he had returned to the Catholic Church on the day when politics and patriotism bade him unite dynastic rights with religious rights. For the same reasons of expediency, the erring husband decided to resume the bonds of friendship with his wife as the readiest method of loosening the marriage knot.

Margaret eagerly welcomed his advances. It cost her no great effort to withdraw from the League, because recently she had not been committed to it. The Holy Alliance would have thrown her over in the end as a useless burden if she had not made the first break. The young Canillac was one of the first to submit to the King and swear obedience. Other nobles followed his example. The League broke up into parties—those of the Duke of Nemours, the Duke of Mayenne and the partisans of Spain. As if the Royalists shared the same tendency to separate into factions, Vernyes reports that the followers of the Count of Auvergne were acting independ-

ently. This was a special reason that made Margaret seek her husband's protection. She had got nothing out of her nephew and was afraid that he might try to seize Usson. She was living from hand to mouth. She was in such financial straits that she was forced to raise money by any means. She did not wait for her husband's return to the Catholic Church, known as the "King's Mass," to begin bargaining for the price of relinquishing her title of wife.

The devoted servants of Henry IV had long been considering a second marriage which would give their master lawful heirs. But first of all, it was necessary to "unmarry" him. Adultery as grounds for divorce was not admitted by Catholic doctrine, and such a charge would cause great scandal in any case. Canon law, however, held as null and void the joining in matrimony of two persons where the free consent of either party was lacking. It would be sufficient to obtain from Margaret the admission, true enough as it happened, that the Queen Mother and Charles IX had married her to the King of Navarre contrary to her wishes and her faith. Du Plessis-Mornay persuaded the King to send Erard to Usson to assure the Queen of his "good favour and protection." Three months later, the emissary returned, bearing her consent to her husband's desire.[1]

She did not give it gratis, however. She set conditions: a guarantee of her property and the revenues she held from her brothers, and a sum of two hundred thousand crowns to discharge her debts. The King delayed some time in executing the terms of the agreement; he, too, was short of funds. But Margaret pressed her claim as urgently as she dared for the fulfilment of the royal promises. Persistent in her demands, she was not even content with her due. She begged him

[1] Guessard, p. 300 and note.

not to "love her less well than had her brothers," and suggested that he might grant her the income of fifty thousand francs a year which she had always enjoyed under the former reigns.[1]

The King had offered, through Erard, to "lease" her a castle for her safety, either Usson or another, perhaps with the hope that she would abandon the fortress that was dangerously exposed to attack from the Count of Auvergne. But she thought herself very safely sheltered there, and well situated for treating with him. "This hermitage," she said, "seems to have been marvellously built to be my ark of safety, and, solitary though it is, I shall think it most blessed if your favour is granted to me, the which is the greatest happiness I look for in my old age."[2]

Always very respectful and apparently grateful for the King's kindness, Margaret never forgets that she is driving a bargain. Let him despatch the funds, and she will send him her petition for divorce as she had promised Erard. Henry IV wrote of his best assurances and swore his "everlasting gratitude." For him to be so courteous and almost tender to the "lady of Auvergne" shows how greatly he desired to have children from a legal marriage.

At first it seemed that the dissolution of the marriage would be easy, since both parties agreed. Margaret drew up her petition in the proper form. There was no question of a court's decision. But after the King had returned to the Church, it was difficult to know to what tribunal to appeal. The Pope had taken it amiss that the Royalist bishops in France had used their authority to absolve a heretic monarch, and he refused to receive the ambassador sent to announce to him the abjuration of Saint-Denis. It was not the moment to

[1] Guessard, pp. 302-303.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 307, 308.

apply to Rome. Doubtless a French bishop would have the courage to dissolve the marriage, but it would be a grave mistake to antagonize the Pope by a fresh proof of independence. No Catholic princess could consent to a marriage without the Papal sanction. When his first enthusiasm for a second marriage had calmed down, Henry IV was very content to prolong the delay. He was madly in love with his new mistress, Gabrielle d'Estrées, and was in no hurry to marry.

The correspondence between him and Margaret continued to be positively affectionate. Never had they been so close as now at the time they had agreed to part. As she had tried once before, Margaret began propitiating the mistress. She knew of the King's passion for Gabrielle d'Estrées and thought that she could gain some credit for her affability. She made no protest when he gave her patronage of the Abbey of Saint-Cornille to his mistress. She wrote to the lady assuring her of her good will and added the flattering postcript, "I speak to you freely, and as to one I would hold as my sister, whom I esteem most highly after the King himself."[1]

Her protests are entirely too fervid to be disinterested, and indeed she was asking a great favour of her. She was by now tired of Usson, where she had been confined for over ten years. The Pope had accepted the abjuration, Mayenne had given his submission, peace reigned within the kingdom and without. But the divorce proceedings made no progress. The resources of the kingdom were exhausted by so many wars. Henry IV suffered from the general impoverishment and Margaret was no better off. She had received no income during the whole year;[2] twice her creditors had threatened her. In this necessity, she longed to leave Auvergne and reëstablish her finances in France.

[1] Guessard, p. 327.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 328.

Still no direct permission came from the Court of France. At one time she was tempted to take silence as token of consent. But she was afraid of giving offence. What would the King do if she should appear before Paris while he was still finishing up his campaign in the north? As a last resort, she turned to the favourite. She begged her to intercede and bring the King to grant her permission to return to one of her estates in France. But Henry IV did not think it was politic to draw public attention to the wife from whom he was about to be separated, and Gabrielle may have feared the comparisons which the presence of the discarded Queen might provoke.

The question of the divorce hung in suspense. After his reconciliation with Rome, Henry IV had other matters to occupy his mind—the recapture of Amiens from the Spaniards and the expulsion of the Savoyards from Dauphiné. In 1598, however, his old desire sprang up with renewed force. There was no longer talk of a princess for bride. The King's love for Gabrielle d'Estrées grew stronger with the birth of his children. In 1594, she bore him a son, named Cæsar. She lived at Rouen like a queen, and her daughter, born in 1596, was baptized with as much ceremony as would have been accorded a daughter of France. Even more significant was the title of Monsieur, which was given to the second son, Alexander, born in 1598.

Sully was at liberty to point out to Henry IV the reasons of state that were opposed to such an undignified union. But Margaret was in no position to chide her husband. Above all, it was important for her to obtain the money she needed from the divorce proceedings. At the bottom of her heart, though, she must have been amazed to see her husband plunge into the depths again after all his dangers and difficulties, and all

for the sake of a "hussy's" bright eyes. What troubles he was laying up for himself and this line of legitimized bastards! It was simply a madman's folly to sacrifice his interests and those of the kingdom to his pleasure and weakness. Margaret could only signify a sort of complacence. She presented the favourite with the Duchy of Etampes, and announced her intention of making the eldest child her heir.

In the beginning of February, 1599, she renewed her power of attorney, which an ambassador, Brûlart de Sillery, was charged to lay before the Pope. But once more the whole affair was suspended. She had not received the compensation she had been promised, and she may have feared losing her hold on the King if the Pope admitted her petition too quickly. Brûlart de Sillery finally reached Rome in April, 1599, bearing the necessary instructions. But Clement VIII was sincerely anxious to save the King and the kingdom from the consequences of an unequal marriage, tainted with sin. He did everything he could to delay the proceedings, for the misalliance which would raise to the throne sons born out of wedlock would surely provoke new troubles, "the people of France not being accustomed to suffer blemishes on their Kings' honour." [1]

Henry IV was a lucky man. He might perhaps have disregarded the Pope's disapproval, but, as ever, circumstances came to his rescue. Gabrielle d'Estrées, with child again, had gone to spend Easter in Paris at the home of Sebastian Zamet. On Maundy Thursday she was seized with an attack of apoplexy, and two days later she died, "with great fainting fits and spasms." There was talk of poisoning, but Zamet had no interest in doing away with the prospective Queen, who

[1] Abbé Victor Martin, *Les Négociations du Nonce Silingardi*, thèse 1919, pp. 21-22.

was his friend, besides. Nor would the statesmen or the Pope have been capable of such a crime. Gabrielle was not the first woman to die from illnesses of childbirth. Perhaps during this last pregnancy she had been too much tormented by the opposition of the Church.[1]

As soon as she heard of the favourite's death, Margaret revoked her power of attorney and asked the King's permission to sue directly in the Court of Rome. The ambassador, surprised by the news from Paris, awaited orders. When he received them, he demanded audience from the Pope and submitted to him the request for annulment. Clement VIII feigned surprise and distaste, but it was apparent that his chief objection had been removed. He consulted a congregation of seven cardinals which met on the 31st of August, and ten days later declared that the claims were admissible. Then he appointed as judges of the proceedings in France the Archbishop of Arles and the Cardinals Joyeuse and Silingardi, with power, if the marriage did not seem to them valid, to declare it invalid in the name of the Holy See.

The King told the examining judges that he had known of his blood relationship with his wife, as had everyone else, and that he remembered receiving no Papal authorization to marry her. The Bishop of Paris, Henry Gondi, nephew and successor of Pierre, who had occupied the See in 1572, certified that no dispensation had been received by his uncle.

Margaret had requested permission not to appear before the judges, for fear of showing too much feeling and by her involuntary tears giving them the impression that she was acting as unwillingly in this case as she professed to have done at the time of her marriage. The Archdeacon Bertier and the chief clerk Rossignol were sent to Usson to take her evidence,

[1] *Chronologie Septémaire,* p. 218.

and to them she swore that her brother and her mother had forced and constrained her to marry the King of Navarre.

Two King's Councillors, one of whom was State Secretary in 1572, swore to the exercise of family pressure. Etienne Le Roy, abbé of the Abbey of Saint-Martin in Nevers, certified that the Bishop of Auxerre had refused to perform the marriage, which he said lacked "consent and religion." Péan, Catherine's secretary, had seen Margaret weeping several times. Catherine's maid, Françoise Miquelot, had heard the Queen Mother threaten her daughter, if she did not consent, "to make her the most wretched lady in the kingdom." From all this evidence it appeared that the consent of one of the parties had been lacking, as had also the necessary dispensation from the Pope.

In recognition thereof, the judges pronounced the marriage "null and void" on the 17th of December, 1599, and gave permission "to both His Most Christian Majesty and Her Serene Highness the Queen to contract other alliances." [1]

Henry IV informed Margaret of the dissolution of the bond of their "union" and protested that he wished thereafter to be "her brother, not only in name, but in deed." Margaret replied in her most precious style, expressing her resignation to this will of God and her hopes for future friendship. "I yield then to this law, not to content you, but to obey you, and changing my regrets to praises, I shall glorify God as your King, and you as mine own, for the favour bestowed on me which I receive from your royal and brotherly kindnesses." [2]

Her letter so moved the King that it "drew tears from his eyes," but a sting of reproach reached him. "She complains," he protested, "that I am the cause of her sorrows, but she has

[1] *Corps du Droit des Gens*, déc. 1599, vol. v, part i, pp. 598-599.
[2] L'Estoile, vol. vii, pp. 199-200.

only herself to blame. God is my witness."[1] He increased his allowances to her and she thanked him in the same exalted style. By letters patent of the 29th of December,[2] "he assured her of the title of Queen and Duchess of Valois, and at the same time confirmed her holdings of Agen, Condom, and Rouergue, the four judicatures of Verdun, Rieux, Rivière, and Albigeois, and the duchy of Valois. He offered to settle with her creditors, but she was so ill advised, she said, that she preferred to deal with the matter herself in consideration of a sum of two hundred thousand crowns, payable in four annuities."

The whole separation was on most friendly terms. He was delighted to be free; she, to feel some security, to have an ample revenue and the dignity of a dowager queen.

But this settlement threatened the position of Charles of Valois, Count of Auvergne. At odds with Margaret, of whose claims upon the inheritance of Catherine de' Medici he was aware, held in suspicion by the King, who had reason to mistrust him, he could indeed fear the consequences of a daughter's claim and the royal displeasure. Suddenly a chance appeared to recover the favour of former days—the death of Gabrielle. Six weeks after his protestations of eternal sorrow, the inconsolable lover was at the feet of a new mistress, the half-sister of Charles of Valois. Captivated by the mocking spirit, the mischievous grace, and the extreme youth of Henriette d'Entragues, he pressed his suit and failed. The young lady knew her worth and had wise counsel. Her mother was the famous Marie Touchet, who had borne one son to Charles IX and later two daughters to her husband, Balzac d'Entragues. Both the father and brother intended to get as much

[1] L'Estoile, vol. vii, pp. 197-198.
[2] D. Vaissette, *Histoire du Languedoc*, vol. xi, col. 905-906.

profit as possible out of the royal fancy and sell for the best price what Sully called "the rare bird in the nest." Henriette drew out the bargain to such lengths that her suitor, in his eager desire for her, lavished on her a hundred thousand crowns, created her Marquise de Verneuil, and gave her a written promise of marriage if within six months she were with child and in due course delivered of a boy.[1]

Meanwhile the Councillors of Henry IV were busy arranging a "remarriage"—a marriage of politics. Their choice fell on Marie de' Medici, niece of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. This Florentine Prince, who wanted a strong France to act as counterbalance to the power of Spain in Italy, had indirectly helped the French Crown. He had advanced to Henry of Navarre more than nine hundred thousand gold ducats. Sully, who had to settle the arrears of the civil wars, terrific domestic and foreign debts, was heart and soul in favour of this marriage, which was the best means of satisfying the largest creditor of the kingdom. Immediately after the annulment of Margaret's marriage, negotiations for that of Marie de' Medici were opened.

While the statesmen were marrying him off, Henry IV pursued his romance with Henriette. He installed her at Fontainebleau in the apartments designed for the Queen, and there she bore a son who lived barely long enough to be baptized. But in spite of this disappointment, the young mother did not despair of breaking off the new alliance as long as she had the King's written promise.

Marie de' Medici was married by proxy, landed at Marseilles, and one month later made her state entry into Lyons, where the King met her on the 8th of December, 1600, and that very night consummated the marriage. Through her

[1] Mariéjol, *La Mariage d'Henri IV avec Marie de' Medicis.* Lyon, 1924, p. 3.

mother, Margaret was a cousin of the new Queen, Breton fashion. As soon as she heard of her arrival at Lyons, she hastened to offer her "a good will dedicated to serving and honouring her," and she signed her letter, "your very humble and obedient servant, sister, and subject."[1] While Henriette, in the King's presence, dared to call the Florentine "that fat banker's daughter."

The former wife took a keen interest in the royal household, which she felt in a way was her own handiwork. "The happy news," she wrote to the King on the 17th of March, 1601, "that the Queen is with child will be received nowhere with more joy than by me, as one who has contributed more than any other thereto."[2] When she heard of the birth of a Dauphin, she gave thanks to Heaven with all her heart. And indeed the birth of an heir consolidated the dynasty. It was a splendid "check to hold those who would aim too high," said Marshal Lavardin.

There was considerable discontent in the kingdom. The leaders of the Catholic and Protestant parties did not relish having a man who a few years before had been their equal, speaking and acting as their master. Turenne and other Huguenots were not satisfied with his Edict of Nantes and suspected him of base designs against his old allies. Biron, the ablest general of the royal armies, had been made Governor of Burgundy and aspired to still greater heights. La Fin was busy with plots. And all these men could count on the Duke of Savoy, who hated Henry IV. The Count of Auvergne joined them.

Informed of all these intrigues and manipulations, Henry IV warned Margaret of the "evil intentions" of her "wicked nephew," and especially of his designs on Usson. She replied

[1] Guessard, p. 351. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 346.

with warm indignation: "The chief care that I have in preserving this place is that when I quit it I may make a gift thereof to Your Majesty, to whom I had dedicated it. This ill-advised boy holds many places in this country, houses which he usurped from the late Queen my mother. But with the aid of God, your Majesty may be assured that he will never set foot here." [1]

The King was on his guard. The populace was exasperated by heavy taxes. La Rochelle was rife with discontent; Limoges was in open insurrection; a general uprising was imminent. But it was only a false alarm. Whether from lack of courage or from a desire to turn informer and reap a reward, La Fin revealed to the King the plots and gave up the incriminating papers. Biron was condemned by Parliament and executed on the 29th of July. But the King spared the Count of Auvergne. After several months' imprisonment, he set him free, and as an anonymous poet had it, "showed mercy through love of vice."

Later on the Count of Auvergne and Balzac d'Entragues took advantage of the royal pardon to start their intrigues again. They were brought before Parliament and convicted of dealing with the Spanish ambassador and of criminal designs against the state. Henriette refused to appear. She defied the judges and the King. Even during the trial he was begging for an assignation. At the cost of some favours granted, she saved the lives of her brother and her father. Sentence of death brought against the Count of Auvergne was commuted to life imprisonment, Balzac d'Entragues was set free, and Henriette declared innocent.

Margaret rejoiced in the downfall of the d'Entragues. She had never forgiven Charles of Valois for withholding her

[1] Guessard, p. 347.

mother's inheritance, or Henriette for her power to make the King acquiesce in this injustice. She felt completely assured against the possible return of the mistress when she heard that the King had taken another, one Jacqueline de Bueil, a great beauty. She congratulated the lady. "Obliged by duty and still more by a desire to do honour to all the King loves," she called down benedictions on this irregular attachment and implored Heaven to grant a long continuance of this happiness, "so that that unworthy creature, from whose madness your beauty has delivered us, may never hereafter rise from her ruin."[1] Curious mixture of hatred, moral laxity, and pious sentiment!

Her one desire was to please the King, on whom she was utterly dependent. In spite of all the money she had received, she was so extravagant that it flowed through her fingers. Her officials managed her affairs badly as well, and she was always more or less in debt. She had learned how to be patient, but she would not let a favourable opportunity slip to improve her financial position. The moment had come when she could take up the important question of Catherine's will.

By her will of the 5th of January, 1589, the Queen Mother had left to Charles of Valois, natural son of the late Charles IX, the counties of Clermont and Auvergne, and other lands.

Regardless of her disinheritance, Margaret had always considered herself her mother's legal heiress. She now attacked the will on its weakest point, the disposition of the county of Lauranguais in Languedoc. This Catherine had first designed for Christine of Lorraine,[2] but she changed the bequest to the Bishop of Langres. To which did the property belong? Margaret summoned the Bishop to relinquish his claim, and the

[1] L. Sandret, *Revue historique et nobiliaire*, 1870, p. 42.
[2] *Lettres*, vol. ix, p. 496.

Parliament of Toulouse granted her eleven parts of the revenue, "whereof twelve parts make up the whole." This was a first success. The day after the arrest of the Count of Auvergne, she informed the King that she was going to take steps to recover her possessions from the hands of "him who is no longer nephew, since he has opposed Your Majesty."

Catherine's will seemed invulnerable. By her marriage contract Margaret had received three hundred thousand gold crowns, and had renounced her claim on further estates of the late King her father or the Queen her mother.[1] The Parliament of Paris, having been shown Catherine's will, had put Charles of Valois in provisional possession of the domains of Auvergne. But the judges did not, at that time, know of the marriage contract of Catherine and the Duke of Orléans, later Henry II, signed in 1533.[2] One of the ladies-in-waiting had had the document in her keeping, and she now produced it. It was of capital importance, for it plainly stated that all the personal royal estates should be handed down to the legitimate children in order of primogeniture. As Margaret was the only living child of Henry II and Catherine, it followed that she alone would benefit by the clause. On the 30th of May, 1606, the court decreed that she should enjoy the counties of Auvergne.

The fine legal distinctions suggest that politics entered into the decision to a certain extent. At any rate, Margaret gave all her property to the Dauphin, reserving only the revenues, and three years later she yielded even the revenues on the terms of an ample pension.[3] Such was the final act of an unsuccessful marriage and a happy divorce.

[1] Du Mont, *Corps Diplomatique*, vol. v, part i, p. 215.
[2] Contract is cited in *Lettres de Catherine*, vol. x, pp. 481-483.
[3] For her income, see Saint-Poncy, vol. ii, p. 501.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE LIFE AT USSON

THE Castle of Usson, now no more than a ruin, seems picturesque in the old pictures, set high on its volcanic peak, with its triple circle of walls, its ramparts and storied towers, and its donjon keep which surmounts them with its massive square. But it was no princely residence like those the gracious genius of the Renaissance reared on the banks of the Loire, on the borders of the forests, in the rich game country—Blois, Fontainebleau, Chambord. The concentric roadways, the gates and posterns, the guard-rooms and drawbridges, all made the place seem like a prison to anyone penetrating its fastness. From the keep, the view spread westward over the vast semicircle of the Limagne, where streaks of light marked the course of the Allier, up to the sombre barrier of the mountains of Auvergne. At sunset, in fine weather, and especially on stormy days, there was the magnificent sight of the sun lighting up the peaks with its dying fire or piercing the depth of the clouds with shafts of crimson and gold.

But it is problematical whether the mistress of the stronghold appreciated the majesty of its natural background. To judge from her correspondence and her *Mémoires,* she cared only for a gently rolling countryside, covered with meadows and trees and watered by tranquil streams—a smiling picture of Touraine and the Ile-de-France, where the Valois had loved to live. If she had any liking for these lofty heights which "lift their heads so near to heaven," it was because she could

be, in her Thebaid, like the Holy Fathers in the desert, closer to God. The "cavernous mountains," resounding day and night to the roar of torrents, remind her of the laments of Echo, scorned by the Young Narcissus. She sees and feels nature, not as it really is, but through her religious symbolism and her memory of the classics.[1]

Her descriptions of Usson, in her letters to Henry IV, are concerned only with the strength of the castle and the improvements she was making in this "ark of safety." Of the marvellous panorama, not a word. She endured there much deprivation, if not actual want. It is pure fancy to picture her, as have some of her eulogists, rearranging her household after her conquest of Canillac, and becoming in a few weeks or months the sovereign lady, surrounded by guards, servants, gentlemen, noble ladies, scholars, and men of letters.[2] Nothing is farther from the truth. These rosy accounts make no discrimination as to dates, and are true only of the last years, if they are true at all. Her situation improved after her settlement with Henry IV. But from 1587 to 1593, and even after that, there were some hard times. The first preliminaries of the agreement, at the end of 1592 or the beginning of 1593, granted her an income, but it was not always regularly paid.

Even in 1602 she was pursued by creditors and begged for a renewal of her settlement. That she may have exaggerated her financial difficulties is possible, but it is unbelievable that she invented them out of whole cloth. By dint of entreaties, prayers, and complaints, she managed to secure from the royal treasury the payment of her debts, a material help. But with intermittent revenues, it was not possible for her to do much with the great block of stone and open it up to light and air. She must have contented herself with minor changes and

[1] Guessard, pp. 446-447.

[2] Saint-Poncy, vol. ii, p. 424 ff.

reconstruction. She may have levelled the terrace where the keep rises, and planted flowers and shrubs in these poor gardens of Semiramis.

She also, it is said, "took pains to have disposed about the castle oratories in the form of niches" and built galleries within and without.[1] But such small efforts cannot be compared with the costly works undertaken at the Louvre, or even at Nérac, where the d'Albrets tried to transform a feudal fortress into a palace. Only the poetic Darnalt, one of Margaret's officers, could have compared this marvel of military architecture to the dream place described by Ariosto:

"No mortal eye has ever seen a place more strong or more superb. . . . Between the shining turrets one sees sweet-smelling shrubs, which winter or summer are covered with fine flowers and ripe fruit. . . ."[2]

It was easier for the poet to build castles in the air than for Margaret to build one on solid earth. She probably had to put the halls and rooms in order, left by the Kings of France to gradual dilapidation. Her furniture, which had already made the voyage from Agen to Carlat, came on to Usson in instalments. Her accounts mention the expense of transporting the various convoys.

Only the chapel remained standing after the castle was razed by Richelieu, pitiless destroyer of feudal architecture. Today it is the parish church of Usson, dedicated to Saint-Maurice. At the right of the choir is the sacristy where the Queen, if an inscription is to be believed, regularly attended Mass. Even this is doubtful, for the place, lighted only by the door, does not seem suitable for holding service. There certainly existed within the castle, as can be proved from some

[1] Saint-Poncy, vol. ii, p. 438.
[2] Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, canto x, 58, 60, 61, 63.

sixteenth-century woodwork, another church or chapel,[1] specially reserved for Margaret and her attendants, while the church of Saint-Maurice served for the rest of the inhabitants.

In the fire of her tribulation her faith had been rekindled. "Now that the world has abandoned her," wrote Brantôme in 1593, "she has found help in God alone, whom she serves every day and most devoutly . . . never does she miss a celebration of the Mass."[2] Darnalt also praises her piety: "After the Mass, she lingers in the chapel, praying ardently to God."[3] Usson became a "holy and religious habitation," a "temple sanctified to God," a "royal hermitage," and "a monastery of devotion." Margaret was living a life out of the world. With her love for music, she had her chapel refitted so that there she could have praises to God and verses of her own composition sung "by her little choristers."

As soon as she escaped from the worst of her poverty, she extended her friendships. After the younger Canillac had deserted the League, and after the conversion of the King, which ensured obedience from the Catholic nobility, the renewed safety of the roads brought her some few visitors, whom she welcomed with her old grace. Brantôme, her devoted Platonic lover, came to see her in 1593. The learned Scaliger paid a visit some years later. The noblemen who had stood aloof during her misfortunes approached her again now that her position was assured by her husband's favour. Henri de Noailles, who had ridiculed the Queen in the days of Carlat, now advised his mother to go see her, "for she would live henceforth as a Queen, in a small way."

The gentlemen came too late; they found the best places

[1] *Itinéraire*, p. 360.
[2] Brantôme, vol. viii, pp. 81-82.
[3] Darnalt, pp. 124, 126.

taken. While they shunned her, she had organized her life in her own way. During her first years, with her tiny, reduced Court, she must have felt like a prisoner in a strange existence. "For women of the world," La Bruyère was to say later, "a gardener is a gardener, and a mason is a mason; for other women, more withdrawn from the world, a mason is a man, a gardener is a man." So it was with the lonely lady of Usson. She who had had for suitors the Duke of Guise in the fire of his youth and the glory of military renown; Bussy d'Amboise, king of swordsmen; Champvallon, the handsomest man of his day; and other great lords—was reduced to bestowing her favours on her servants. Scaliger says, baldly, "she has as many men as she wishes, and she selects them herself."

Claude François, choirmaster in the Cathedral of Le Puy, and the son of a brazier in that town, seems to have been the first of these servants of the heart.[1] She had him come to teach her choristers; she took a fancy to him, made him her secretary and ennobled him. In 1595, he was Lord of Pominy.[2] Three years later, he is styled Secretary of Finance, and in 1600 he was handling all her affairs.[3] In 1601 he was married to Michelette de Faugière, one of the maids of honour, and Margaret provided the bride's dowry.

The only reference to the end of this attachment is in the *Divorce Satyrique*. Pominy apparently absented himself from Usson for too long a time to suit Margaret's burning ardour. She chose a successor, a young Provençal named Dat, son of a carpenter in Arles. This youth she ennobled with the seigneury of Saint-Julien in Lauraguais, and in 1604 she married him off to a lady of good birth.

[1] Chassaing, *Mémoires de Jean Burel*, p. 481.
[2] *Archives de la Haute Loire*, folio 87.
[3] *Archives du Puy*, reg. i, no. 228.

Her infatuations cost her dear, but she had other pleasures, and these were innocent, worthy, and refined. She was, after all, an intellectual woman. Her early education may have been neglected; her handwriting may be sprawling and crude; her spelling and punctuation may be abominable. But she was certainly not ignorant. She had a thorough knowledge of Italian and Spanish She could understand Latin. If she could not read Greek, her library was full of Greek authors and translations of their works.

Her best schooling had been at Court. There in daily contact with her mother, her brothers, the great ladies, the gentlemen, scholars, prelates, and poets, she had learned the world and the language it uses. Conversation is half, and more than half, of most women's education. Like Henry III, Margaret excelled in the art of expression. Quick and scintillating, she was never at a loss for a ready word or witty reply, and she bantered "so charmingly" that her company was the pleasantest in the world, except perhaps when her tongue was barbed with malice.

The retreat at Usson added to her natural gifts, to her experience of life and politics, the knowledge acquired by familiarity with books. "She is very anxious," wrote Brantôme, describing his visit, "to obtain all the fine new books that are being composed, those of holy subjects as well as those of the humanities; and when she begins to read a book, long though it may be, she will not stop until she come to the end, and often she forgets food and sleep thereby."[1]

Of the extent and variety of her reading the first traces may be taken from allusions in her *Mémoires* and letters. She read and reread the Bible and often quotes from it. From Herodotus, or perhaps from Plato or the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid

[1] Brantôme, vol. viii, p. 81.

she gets the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. She was familiar with Plutarch's *Lives,* and quotes from memory at the risk of attributing to Themistocles incidents in the lives of Alexander and Alcibiades. She had read Homer in translation, but the Greek work she knew most thoroughly was the *Ethics* of Plato, or at least Marsilio Ficino's adaptation of the *Banquet.*

One is not surprised to find that she knew Horace, but one cannot help admiring her knowledge of the writers of Vulgar Latin, notably the Fathers of the Church. Petrarch was one of her favourite authors, for "he has thought to honour so many mighty and excellent persons, describing them as slaves of love." In Giraldi Cinthio she read the story of the "Moor," one of the sources for Shakespeare.

But the document which gives one a better idea of her tastes than her scattered allusions is the catalogue of the books which were in her library in Paris on the 17th of December, 1608.[1] That was three years after she had left Usson, but a good part of her library undoubtedly belongs to the period of her long retreat and seclusion, acquired then for instruction and consolation. Fragments of it date still farther back, to the time at Nérac, Agen, and Carlat, to each one of the steps in her varied career.

The Queen's library contained about three hundred volumes in print and manuscript, not the thousand claimed by Saint-Poncy. They were classified rather vaguely under four or five headings—history, the classics, philosophy, and theology, without distinction of language or period. From the size of each one of these groups one can judge the tastes of the royal scholar.

Homer was the only Greek poet listed, though she knew

[1] In the archives of the family of Boissieu.

the name at least of Euripides. She probably had a Virgil, too, though the document does not mention it. Lucretius she may have banned on account of his doctrines. Her favourite Latin poets were Ovid and Horace. She had the major Italian poets: *La Commedia* of Dante, annotated by Landino; *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto; and Petrarch in three editions. To these one may add the *Decamerone* of Boccaccio and the *Novelle* of Bandello. Spain was represented, besides a collection of inspirational works, by *Las Obras* of Boscan, *Las Trescientas* of Juan de Mena and the *Cancionero General.*

The array of sixteenth-century French literature was rather meagre. One finds only *Les Marguerites de la Marguerite des Princesses,* the poetic flowers of a Queen of Navarre, which this Queen had had bound in blue morocco; *Les Psaumes de David* of Philip Desportes; the works of Joachim du Bellay, Jodelle, Amadis Jamyn, Remy Belleau; the *Quatrains Moraux.* These seem to make up the whole section of the Renaissance of French poetry, but she also had, although it is not mentioned in the document, a beautiful edition of Ronsard, stamped with her arms.

She let herself be guided for the most part by her preferences. She liked history. Herodotus, Plutarch, Cæsar, and Titus Livy all appear in the catalogue. Then there were the works of piety, theology, and dogma: Saint Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Saint Bernard, and many others. But she had one special interest which, alone of all the learned princesses of the House of France, she shared with her mother, Catherine de' Medici. When her catalogue is published with suitable comment, it will be most surprising to see the extent of her reading in the sciences, in mathematics, physics, natural history, medicine, astronomy, and geography.

Philosophy was the subject which Margaret most longed

to master. She had Plato, the divine Plato, in the Greek text and in Latin translation; instead of a complete Aristotle, impossible to secure in that age, she had Italian, Spanish, and French translations. At one time she had a learned father, François Humblot, come to Usson to instruct her in "speculative philosophy and mathematics."

At the time, philosophy was coming out of the province of mediæval schoolmen and the narrow restrictions of the Latin tongue. It was invading literature and society. At the end of the Renaissance, the human spirit, as if weary of abstractions and metaphysics, turned back on itself and perceived that it held within itself a complete world. Henry III, who, like his sister, loved to discuss philosophy, had brought questions of morals and psychology before the Academy founded by Charles IX.[1] Margaret had been a member of this society. In her library, she kept copies of the debates, imitations of the famous conversations of the Villa Careggi or the Medici Palace, presided over by Cosmo or Lorenzo the Magnificent.

Literature, which had heretofore made Paris and the Court its chosen home, suffered under disturbances of the League. Poetry, which had lived on the patronage of great nobles, had withered. Ronsard died in 1584; Desportes had turned against Henry IV; d'Aubigné had begun his *Tragiques,* but kept the finished bits securely hidden; Malherbe had as yet published only the *Larmes de Saint-Pierre,* in the poor style of the neo-Petrarchists.

Only the prose writers, the historians, the philosophers, the pamphleteers found inspiration in the troubled affairs of the country. For works of the creative imagination, the essential security was lacking. There was none of it in the greater part of the kingdom, above all in the north after the murder of

[1] Mariéjol, *Histoire de France de Lavisse,* vol. vi, part i, p. 213.

the Guises and the assassination of Henry III. The new King, at war with his Catholic subjects, for a long time had too much to do to try to reëstablish the orphaned art of letters. It was only in 1598, after the submission of the last of the members of the League and the signing of the treaty of Vervins with Philip II, that, as he said, he gave France time to breathe again.

During those first nine years of his reign he lived very little in Paris, and he had no other Court than the gathering of captains and councillors who followed him wherever politics or combat called him.

But literature, true to ancient habit, longed for the support and appreciation of a master. There was one region in France, stretching from Lyons to the mountains of Auvergne, where even in the midst of general disturbance, a certain peace was maintained. There lived the last of the Valois Medici, happily restored from her disgrace in 1593, a princess, who by her culture and taste could carry on the tradition and uphold the prestige of two illustrious families. Towards her turned the writers who sought inspiration far from the confusion of the scene of battle.

Usson seemed to them like another Parnassus, where the Queen presided over her "choir of nine muses." In this tiny Court, without great resources, the gracious welcome, the praise and encouragement, offered by its lady took the place of benefits, pensions, and favours. In a period still unsettled, it was both a consolation and a hope, a reflection in miniature of the past, and a vision of the future.

By a curious sort of revival, sentimental literature sprang up again in this country from which it had once spread over all the kingdom. Lyons, in the sixteenth century the centre of printing, the great market for silks, and the most important

branch of the Italian banking houses, had been one of the cradles of the doctrine of Ideal Love. The idea came, of course, from Marsilio Ficino, who had adapted Plato to Christian theory. The writers of Lyons gave it literary form, and from the Florentine dogma drew a school of poetry. Margaret of Angoulême, sister of Francis I and Margaret's great-aunt, a weaver of tales and mystic poetry, had made Platonism fashionable. Even in the frequently licentious stories of her *Heptameron* there runs the current of the new idealism.

The theory of ideal love spread all over France; the upper classes and the poets adopted it for a time. But there were protests. Montaigne scoffed at the new æsthetics, "which deal with things too nicely in an artificial way, not common and natural." But the real blow was struck by the civil wars. The human animal, unchained by ambitions, greed, personal passions, and religious hatred, had spread arson, pillage, theft, and violence from one end of the kingdom to another. What place could there be for refined feelings, what respect for womanhood could be expected from men who had gone through such struggles?

But suddenly, with the prospects of a general peace, there appeared new books, romances with significant titles—*The Chaste and Faithful Loves; The Chaste and Constant Loves; The Unhappy Ladies and the Chaste Loves,* etc.

From Le Forez came that masterpiece of sentimental literature, *l'Astrée.* The great feudal family of the d'Urfés took up the tradition of the School of Lyons. The three brothers were all cultivated, familiar with the wide learning of the Italian Renaissance, students of Aristotle, followers of Plato. Their intellectual tastes brought them close to Margaret.

The youngest, Antoine d'Urfé, was killed by a cannon-shot when he was only twenty-three. But he had already written

two dialogues in imitation of Plato, and one epistle, *On the Beauty of the Spirit acquired by the Study of the Sciences,* addressed to "Madame Margaret of France, Queen of Navarre."

Honoré d'Urfé was not one of her lovers, but he speaks of Usson as if he visited there often. He did not dedicate the first volume of his *Epistres Moraux* to the royal châtelaine, but he paid homage to her in his third book, published in 1608 and the most philosophic of all, feeling that these discourses were fit offering for the supreme Princess of the sciences.

Anne d'Urfé, the head of the house, warrior and poet, though a mediocre one, was also one of Margaret's admirers. He had had an unhappy marriage with a beautiful and unemotional woman, Diane de Château-Morand. It was finally annulled, and to console himself he became a priest and devoted himself to singing the praises of ideal love. He dedicated to Margaret the fifth book of his *Hymnes,* in 1608.

With all these friends, Margaret moved on a plane of Platonic idealism. She became a sort of goddess of the cult, and to her were written passages of exalted spirituality, where the love of beauty and the love of God were fused into one passionate aspiration. It was Honoré d'Urfé who said, "He is most guilty . . . who stops before the beauties of the body and looks not up to those of the soul." There is no doubt that Margaret herself was deeply penetrated with this religion of love. A great wind of spirituality was sweeping over her. Her adorers, forgetful or ignorant of the scandal in her life, wanted her to be chaste at all costs. Pen in hand, she went over her old love letters, cutting out all that concerned the body and emphasizing all that was of the soul. Faithful to the doctrine of *Honest Love,* she refined passion and etherealized it until it became more of heaven than of earth.

The *Mémoires,* which were written at Usson towards 1600, bear many traces of the Platonic influence. In one of the finest passages she explains her joy when her mind opened to an understanding of the world. It was during her captivity at the Louvre in 1575 when she began to turn to reading and devotion. Then, "reading in this beautiful universal book of nature of the marvels of its Creator, the soul comes to realize the ladder of which God is the last and highest rung, and in ecstasy adores the wondrous light and splendour of this incomprehensible Being; making a perfect circle, it follows with joy the chain of Homer wherein all things coming from God and returning to Him, form part of the beginning and end of all things."[1] This "chain of Homer" which Zeus boasts of holding between his hands, she has transformed into a spiritual ladder, joining man to God. This conception she took from the *Theætetus,* translated by Marsilio Ficino.

It is curious to see where she departs from the philosophy of her masters. Margaret, the passionate-hearted, the foolish, the impulsive, writes, almost with a sigh, one would imagine, "Joy takes far away from us the thoughts of our actions; sorrow it is that awakens the soul."

Many of her thoughts are borrowed; she has too ready a memory to be original. But her individual contribution is a mingling of earthly passion and devotion, of sacred and profane love—a mingling wherein her mysticism and her ardour could find satisfaction. Wherever she drew her inspiration, she clarifies and assimilates it so well that it is often difficult to fix the exact source.

Brantôme praises her poetic talent. "She often makes verses, and has them sung by her choristers, or sings them herself, for she has a beautiful voice and accompanies her songs on the

[1] Guessard, p. 76.

lute, which she touches very deftly." But from the fragments one can credit definitely to her, there seems no reason to call her a poetess. The sonnets, laments, and odd stanzas are precious and laboured, the conscious bending of words into an accepted form.

At Usson, her intellectual development reached its complete maturity. There, during her nineteen years' residence, she had time to read, to meditate, to feed her mind on theories and knowledge. Yet she says nothing of it. It is true that her *Mémoires* stop at the year 1582. But it seems strange that she makes no allusion, even the vaguest, to her retreat in the fortress of Auvergne. She recounts at length the captivity in the Louvre, though it lasted only two or three months, calling it a trial given her for her good. That little apprenticeship to the "boons of sadness and solitude" did not bring her to a real intellectual mastery.

During the next ten years she was too much taken up with the affairs of her brother and her husband, with the pastoral of Nérac, with her love for Champvallon and her adventures at Agen and Carlat, to find time to read.

But at Usson there were no more intrigues of heart and politics, no more hasty flights, no more excitement or ambition; here was a life in monochrome, with a horizon limited to the sweep of view from her terrace. Barring the hours when she remembered only too well that she was a woman, she could have no greater or better pleasure than to satisfy her thirst for knowledge. She gave herself to it with a whole heart, for here too she could tolerate no half measures, and once she started reading, she would sacrifice food and sleep to it. She read hundreds of volumes, sometimes with a pen in her hand. All her learning, sacred, profane, philosophical, is in large part due to this long seclusion, far from entertain-

ments, intrigues, and plots. She will not make the confession, as if she hated to admit that any good had come out of her wretchedness in Auvergne. She says that the castle was her ark of safety, but it was far more than that. It was the scene of her rehabilitation and her glory. What would be remembered of her were it not for her autobiography and her letters? Little beyond the roll of her amorous adventures. There she planned her apology, and as that apology is a work of art, posterity passes over her faults, smiles at her weaknesses, and welcomes in the halls of memory this Princess, the last of the Valois.

But Margaret had no affection for her hermitage and for a long time was hoping to escape from the "deserts" of the mountains, longing to get back to the fair lands of France. An occasion offered when there was some danger of new disturbances after the execution of Biron and the flight of Turenne, now the Duke of Bouillon. From Sedan, he was stirring up the Huguenots again, and the agitation threatened to reach Auvergne, where he held lands, and where the unfortunate Charles of Valois had friends.

Margaret feared or pretended to fear that a new revolt would force her to shut herself up as if besieged. She thought that the moment had come to approach the King. In a letter of January 30th, 1605, she expressed her hope to be allowed to go to Villers-Cotteret, where she could obtain relief for certain "grave and violent maladies" she had suffered "all that year."[1] She received no answer, and three months later renewed her request, this time specifying her house at Boulogne as her destination.

Suddenly in July she arrived at Arthenay, near Orléans, on her way to Paris. She had left Auvergne without permission,

[1] Guessard, p. 389.

probably for fear of being told not to stir a step. Sully and Varenne appeared on the scene too late to stop her. She had left Usson in the hands of an aged gentleman and the Swiss guards; Mme. de Vermont also remained to see that they performed all their duties. The King had nothing to fear for the important stronghold. "From your Majesty I received it, and to your Majesty I return it," said Margaret.

Her plans went no further than Boulogne. On this point she was quite sincere. Her long trials had taught her wisdom, and she had no desire for anything but a life of tranquillity. If she wished to be nearer Paris, it was not to do mischief there. She longed to come back to the scenes of her childhood and early youth. She hoped for the pleasures of society again, for the attraction of a Court, for the friendship with distinguished people, for all the brilliance and sparkle of the capital. It seemed a fair enough reward for the harsh penance in Auvergne.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE RETURN TO PARIS AND THE LAST YEARS

HENRY IV would have much preferred to have her far away from Paris, for various reasons. He may have feared that the prestige of the name of Valois would threaten his own authority, or his second wife may have had some feeling at the thought of the close proximity of the first. He took occasion to explain to Don Giovanni de' Medici, the Queen's uncle, that he had taken Margaret under his protection to escape from the partisans of the Duke of Bouillon who were trying to seize her person and force her to admit that she had not been a willing party to the divorce. This was probably the best way he could meet an embarrassing situation, and it would anticipate any reproaches from Marie de' Medici.

But whether he was surprised or not, he hid his feelings. He despatched Roquelaire, an old friend of the days of Nérac and one of whom she had been fond, to meet her at Etampes, and he chose his beloved natural son, Cæsar, Duke of Vendôme, a little boy of eleven, to welcome her. After the Dauphin, whose exalted position and tender age kept him at the Louvre, this child was the most important person the King could have selected, a Prince of the Blood, albeit with the bar sinister, and the most dearly loved. Margaret, who knew of the King's affection for this son, did not fail to praise his beauty, "fit result of a royal birth" and "his understanding, which surpasses his age." "In truth," she said, "this is royal

offspring worthy of your Majesty, who creates nothing, whether animate or inanimate, which does not excel the ordinary, like these fine buildings I see from the river." [1]

On her first visit she simply crossed Paris on her way to Boulogne, to the Château de Madrid. On the 2nd of August she arrived for a longer stay. The Provost Marshal and the sheriffs, having been advised of her intention and uncertain of the King's wishes, asked Villeroy what they should do. The King was away, and the Secretary of State was much embarrassed. Perhaps he was afraid that the common people, tired of the strict economies of Sully, would give some demonstration in favour of the last of the Valois.[2] He did not believe, he replied with prudence, that Queen Margaret would come to Paris without seeing the King, but that if she should come, His Majesty bade them call upon her and salute her, without other ceremonies.

Consequently, the Provost Marshal and the sheriffs, accompanied by the town clerks, bearing "sweetmeats and torches," betook themselves to the cloister of Notre-Dame, where Margaret was dining with the Bishop of Rieux, her old Chancellor, Bertier. Their spokesman expressed their appreciation of all the great benefits they had received from her forebears, their delight at seeing in her the "living image of Their Majesties," and their desire to convey to her the compliments of the city.

These homages, couched in stilted official language, showed not so much a sympathy for the Valois as a resentment against the existing government. Pleasantly surprised by this welcome, Margaret thanked the municipality for the honours it gave her and the gifts, and added, "had she believed she would be so kindly greeted in this town, she would long ago have

[1] Guessard, p. 396.
[2] Miron de l'Espinoy, *François Miron*, 1885, pp. 228-229.

come to visit it."[1] A gracious answer, with a light irony attached.

Reassured, the King paid her a visit, and advised her, it is said, to be less extravagant and not to turn night into day. To which she replied that she was too old to give up her habit of rising and retiring late, and that liberality was a tradition of her family. The King could laugh at her wit, now that it no longer was directed against him.

He chided Marie de' Medici, when Margaret was received at the Louvre, for not advancing far enough to greet her. He treated her as a sister, and never had he loved her so much as now when it was not his duty to love her at all.

She took up her residence in the Hôtel de Sens, built by the Bishop of Sens, Tristan de Salazar. It was a remarkable example of the civil architecture of the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance, with its sentry boxes, large courtyard, and towers. But she was soon driven from it by a tragedy. She had brought with her her lover, Saint-Julien, the youth from Provence. This ambitious young man wanted to be more than the favourite of the bedchamber, and aspired to controlling the royal household. His rise threatened the position of Mme. de Vermont, who had enjoyed great power. Her son, a boy of eighteen, jealous of the favourite, shot him dead with a pistol at the door of the coach which was taking the Queen to the Hôtel de Sens. He escaped on horseback, but was seized before he had passed the gates of Paris. By order of the royal mistress, he was executed the next day on the very spot where the crime had been committed. Margaret watched his execution, and the same day left the ill-omened house.

She returned to the Château de Madrid and later went to

[1] *Registres du Bureau*, vol. xiii, pp. 469-470.

Issy, which she bought from a Sieur de la Haye. This became her favourite country residence, a miniature Fontainebleau, which she enlarged as far as her means permitted. The estate passed by endowment to the parish of Saint-Sulpice in the eighteenth century; when the priests took possession of the place, "nothing was changed in the little pavilion of the Queen. . . . The Venuses were turned into Virgins, the Cupids into angels, and the devices, writ in Spanish, could shock no one."[1] From Italy had come the fashion of beautifying the country palaces with running water and fountains. As Catherine had used the waters of the Seine and the Cher for her gardens at the Tuileries and Chenonceaux, Margaret diverted the brooks that ran through the meadows back of her house, and turned them into winding streams and murmuring fountains. Not far from the main villa, which was called the Little Olympus of Issy, haunt of the muses and gods, was a tiny house, the Casino, reserved for a more intimate worship. Her tender heart was so distressed by the loss of Saint-Julien that she hastened to find a consoler, and chose, as always, one who was young and fair. This was a younger son of Gascony, Bajaumont, and he reigned over the sanctuary of love.

Issy served merely for a summer residence after the Queen had built her palace on the banks of the Seine opposite the Louvre. In 1608 she was already installed. She had bought from the Benedictines of Saint-Germain des Prés, from the University, and from private individuals a large piece of land between the river and the present streets, rue Jacob, rue des Saints-Pères, and rue de Seine. Between courtyard and garden she erected a palace of which there remains only a part

[1] Ernest Renan, *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, p. 226.

of the façade and a chapel built into the Ecole des Beaux Arts. To the west, two flights of steps led down to a park where Louis XIII hunted a fox that had been specially imported for the purpose.[1]

Among the state chambers there was one designed for large receptions, which also served, on occasion, as a theatre. The Queen's chamber was adorned with a Turkish carpet, and the walls were hung with Dutch landscapes and religious pictures in the Italian manner. There was only one portrait, and that was of Henry IV.

In the time of her despair at Usson she had vowed to build a monument to God if he would deliver her from danger and lead her back safely to the lands of her fathers. The story of Jacob seemed singularly appropriate to her, thinking of his long exile, far from the Promised Land. While waiting for sufficient means to build an abbey church, she raised a little chapel of thanksgiving, domed and adorned and embellished with ornaments and gilding.[2] Later she began the great church that was to be known as the Church of the Holy Trinity; the name of the rue Jacob recalls her vow.

Except for brief stays at Issy, she spent the rest of her life in this residence in the rue de Seine. She could see the windows of the Louvre and the span of the Pont-Neuf, just completed by Henry IV. Malicious tongues made light of these two palaces facing each other, as if that of the left bank were the only abode of sin. But there was as much to be said of the other as a dwelling-place of virtue. In 1605 Henry IV was fifty-one years old, with white hair and a lined face. But his gallantry showed no falling off. After Henriette d'Entragues, he had as mistresses Jacqueline de Bueil and Char-

[1] Héroard, vol. ii, p. 7. Simone Ratel, vol. xi, pp. 5, 6.
[2] D. Félibien-Lobineau, p. 42.

lotte des Essarts, not to mention attachments of the moment and passing fancies. His Most Christian Majesty lived with all these women, including his wife, in a Court which resembled the harem of the Grand Turk. When this incorrigible scoffer bestowed a bad name on his former wife's residence, he was just expressing the prejudice that his own sex had the only privileges of license. From the point of view of abstract morality, his own polygamous habits merited the application of a similar adjective.

Even under the system of servants of the heart, Margaret never had more than one lover at a time. She may not have mourned much for her lost favourites, she may have replaced them quickly, but at least she was faithful to them while they lived or continued to please her. Unlike Henry IV, who was cynical in his sensuality and only moderately jealous, she could not bear the idea of sharing affections. Bajaumont was stupid, but she loved him for his physical beauty. For his sake she dismissed one of her maids of honour, whose attractions she feared. He finally died. Villars, who succeeded him, was the last of her lovers. With her advancing years, Margaret still refused to give up the world, and continued her strange paradox of sensuality and piety.

The Court of the Louvre, which had no reason to criticize that of the other side of the river on the score of liberty of speech and manner, could have taken it for a model on certain points. Neither Henry IV nor Marie de' Medici had the qualities required to carry on the Valois tradition of ceremony. She had lived all her life at a small Court; she was, besides, heavy, lazy, unintelligent. He, being by nature a hunter and a soldier, could not bring himself to the formulæ of the rites of his position. They had no desire to reëstablish what they had never known, that absorbing life of show in which the

Valois had delighted. Whenever Henry III had deigned to appear in public, he was every inch a king, by his bearing, his dignity of manner, and his natural air of greatness. The former King of Navarre could never attain the proper seriousness and dignity; he always seemed to be laughing at something or some one. Mme. de Simier, one of the beauties of the preceding reign, could not keep from saying after one of the receptions, "I have seen the King; I have not seen His Majesty."

The Valois Medicis loved letters and the arts and, like true patrons, favoured them with consideration, pensions, and benefices. Henry IV had an honest dread of becoming the paymaster-in-chief to the Republic of Letters, and no great desire to be even its protector. For him, action made a man; he disliked the philosophers. He could hardly bear the fatigue of reading. He never, indeed, read a book, but had such works as interested him read aloud. Even a fairly long letter exasperated him. More than once Margaret begged him as a personal favour to take the trouble to go on to the end of her letters, or else to call in a reader, if the effort involved were too great a strain. One of his contemporaries tells how he would conduct his councils striding up and down the room. He was too stingy to give a suitable pension to Malherbe, but asked his Equerry-in-chief to see that he had food and wages. If he encouraged the poet at all, it was only to get him to compose *billets-doux* for his numerous ladies. His sole passion was for building; manual labour and tangible results appealed to him.

Margaret was very different in her tastes and standards. If her morals were no better, and were considered worse, her Court at least was more distinguished. "The troubles of the last years," says Pierre Matthieu, "reduced the number of her

servitors, but order and splendour were ever to be seen at her Court, which was always graced by ten ladies whose beauty was matched by nobility of birth."[1] She maintained a strict ceremonial in the rue de Seine: "royal in all her acts," reports Pasquier, "her simplest meals are served in regal style, with gentlemen in attendance and the *maître d'hôtel* carrying his staff of office."[2]

Her palace was open to foreigners as well as to renowned Frenchmen. A member of the English aristocracy, Herbert Cherbury, later ambassador under Louis XIII, was making the grand tour in 1608. He was warmly welcomed by Henry IV. "I also betook myself," he writes, "to the Court of Queen Margaret in the palace which bears her name. There I witnessed many ballets and masquerades, during which the Queen did me the favour to place me near her chair, not without arousing the astonishment and envy of several of those who were wont to enjoy that honour."[3]

The most striking difference between the two Courts was due to the fact that Margaret received poets, statesmen, historians, and philosophers in addition to her old friends and people of high standing. There was good conversation in her *salons,* and at her table the talk was often in a philosophic vein. Pasquier tells how she would introduce topics to her guests, how she would mingle food for the mind with food for the body, how attentively she would listen and argue with her learned companions. The gatherings in the rue de Seine also recall the first venture of Charles IX and Baïf. "After these distinguished gentlemen finished their discourses, there would follow music of violins and singing, and finally that of

[1] Pierre Matthieu, *Histoire de Louis XIII,* p. 40.
[2] Etienne Pasquier, 1723, vol. iii, col. 666.
[3] *Mémoires de Edouard Lord Herbert de Cherbury* . . . traduits . . . par le Comte de Baillon, Paris, Techener, 1863, p. 66.

the lutes. All played with a marvellous art, bringing pleasure to the royal mistress and as much to her guests, who felt greatly honoured to be of the company." [1]

After the last years of the reign of Henry III and the disorder caused by the League, the Court had lost its intellectual and social leadership in the country. Freed somewhat unwillingly from the royal guidance, society began to recognize other centres than the Louvre.[2] Great ladies, like the Duchess of Retz, the Duchess of Rohan, and the Princess of Léon, had their circle of friends, *protégés* and writers. But none of them had the position or prestige that came naturally to Margaret. Until the formation of the *salon* of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, where the upper middle class vied with the aristocracy in cultivating literature, Margaret was the one person best qualified by rank, by intelligence, and by knowledge of the world to take the place of Mæcenas, which the King had let slip through his fingers.

No survivor of the Pleiad remained; Pontus de Thayard, the last star of the constellation, had died in 1605. To fill in the gaps, Margaret had her household poets, Bouteroue and Vital d'Audiguier. Francis Maynard, however, was no mere versifier in search of easy money; he was a real poet and a writer of irreproachably pure style. For three years he was Margaret's secretary, and perhaps a little more than that. She had a very high opinion of his talents; Le Pays writes, "when she had conceived a happy thought, she would scratch it down quickly on paper in its rough state, then she would give it to Maynard, telling him to arrange it and put it into verse. This he would do with such ease and grace that she was in the

[1] Etienne Pasquier, vol. ii, cols. 666-667.
[2] G. Reynier, *Le Roman Sentimental avant l'Astrée*, 1908, pp. 170-173. Simon Ratel, vol. xi, p. 10.

habit of saying that Maynard was an excellent goldsmith who could most admirably perform the setting of gems."

Some of her friends were bohemians, and none too reputable. Scurrilous poets, alchemists, adventurers—all passed through the doors of the palace in the rue de Seine. She also received some of the free thinkers who were criticizing the old methods of scholasticism. Very few historians have given her credit for trying to free knowledge from the narrow limits of the Latinists and give it to the public at large in the vernacular.

In many ways Margaret had very modern ideas. What she claimed for women was the same right to love as that claimed by men. Logically, freedom of morals would follow from her principle of the equality of the sexes. Conditions in the seventeenth century seemed to plead the cause of feminism. Queens had been called to the thrones of great countries, and had shown themselves as capable of ruling as men. To take only the two most prominent examples, Elizabeth of England and Catherine de' Medici had both succeeded in defending their kingdoms from rebellious factions and foreign invasion. Women were excelling in letters and in the sciences, as well as in statecraft. It is not extraordinary that Margaret should have had a very high opinion of her sex. She entrusted her library to Mlle. de Gournay, a great feminist and pedant, befriended by Montaigne. She wanted to educate and edify the ladies of her Court. Matthieu says, "The common exercises of their sex are forbidden; she sends away their handiwork and wishes their minds to turn to higher things, to become familiar with good books and to profit by noble examples." It was a school of purism, and Margaret was the mistress.

But if she thought women superior to men in beauty, gentleness, and even in intelligence, she never considered raising the

standard of feminism against the Salic Law. She was grateful to the King for having restored order and for having assured her own future, and she showed her gratitude and respect in the important issues as well as in trifling things. Knowing how he delighted in the pleasures of Fontainebleau, she called it a paradise and a garden of love. She even offered to further some of his affairs of the heart, reporting a meeting with some lady "who could not cease from speaking of Your Majesty, whom she adores."

On his side, Henry IV showed himself full of attentions. She was always spending huge sums for her buildings, her charities, her largess; she was always short of money. She got money from the King continually, much to the disgust of Sully, who brutally reminded her one day that she, like all French subjects, depended on the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Henry IV came to see her often, and although he called the house in the rue de Seine by an unpleasant name and jested coarsely at the weaknesses of her autumn season, he never failed to show her good will and even a sort of friendship.

Margaret made a great pet of the Dauphin, who called her *Maman ma fille,* and she showered him with ingenious presents. Once it was a Cupid, studded with diamonds, seated on a dolphin with a bow in one hand and a firebrand in the other. Another time it was "a boat of silver gilt set on wheels, going before the wind in the Dutch fashion."[1]

She was on excellent terms with Marie de' Medici. One day Héroard found Margaret kneeling by the Queen's bedside, the King sitting on the bed with the Dauphin in his arms, while the child played with a little dog. Certainly a domestic scene with elements of humour in it. Marie de' Medici liked to consult Margaret about the ceremonial of the

[1] Héroard, vol. i, p. 415.

old Court. The daughter of Catherine de' Medici, who had lived with it and practised it, knew better than anyone else of the traditions, etiquette, and rites of the monarchial life, and she helped the Queen organize the formal receptions. The Louvre had long ceased to be the centre of pleasures and entertainments. When the King of Spain, Philip III, sent Don Pedro of Toledo to Paris to negotiate an alliance, it was in the rue de Seine that a grand ballet was presented for him. Marie de' Medici was the hostess, but she left alll the trouble and expense to Margaret. Their Majesties found her banquet "magnificent and sumptuous . . . which they say cost her four thousand crowns. Among the strange confections were three silver dishes whereon were displayed a pomegranate tree, an orange tree, and a lemon tree, so cunningly made that not one person present but thought them natural." [1]

Margaret was the kindly mistress of ceremonies of the new Court. But there was one function from which she would have been glad to be excused. Before renewing his attack on the Spaniards in the Netherlands, Henry IV had decided to have Marie de' Medici crowned Queen. The first wife had to appear at the coronation of the second, and expose herself to public curiosity and ridicule in a setting that recalled to her as well as to the spectators the remembrance of her lost grandeur. As if this were not humiliation enough, she had to take her place behind the King's eldest daughter, a child of eight. She requested that her mantle, instead of being like the little princess's, embroidered with three rows of fleurs-de-lys, be covered all over, and that her crown be an unbroken circle, "as retaining the rank of a queen, under the promise the King had made." "I do not know," wrote Malherbe,[2] "if

[1] L'Estoile, vol. ix, p. 214.
[2] *Lettres de Malherbe*, vol. iii. Edition des grands Ecrivains, p. 163.

she will be gratified." In spite of her strong control over her feelings, it is very likely that on that day she had the air of sadness which Rubens gives her in his picture of the coronation.

She left Paris immediately afterward for Issy, where she wanted to spend her birthday, the 14th of May, in peace. The 14th had always been a fortunate date for her family: September 14th, 1515, had seen the victory of Marignan; April 14th, 1544, the victory of Cérisoles; March 14th, 1590, that of Ivry. But this time it was to mean tragedy.

In the midst of the birthday celebrations, the news arrived of the assassination of Henry IV. Alarm and sadness spread over the company. One can credit Margaret's grief as sincere. She may not have loved the King,[1] but at least she might fear a return of the civil wars and great danger to the kingdom and to herself. She went at once to the Louvre to pay homage to Marie de' Medici and to give her a pledge of her loyalty and obedience.

She believed that the crime had been the result of a plot sponsored by her old enemies, the Duke of Epernon and the Duchess of Verneuil, or certainly a combination of political, personal, and religious hatreds. The misfortune drew the two queens closer together. Margaret was very attentive. A few days after the Queen made her first appearance outside the Louvre since the death of her husband, she gave her a "magnificent and sumptuous supper in her fine house at Issy."[2] She warned her of the rumour current in Paris of a new St. Bartholomew which was exciting fears and hopes and leading to trouble and agitation.[3] Marie de' Medici, who had a great respect for her, "as exceeding well disposed to all that

[1] Du Pleix declares she did love him.
[2] L'Estoile, vol. x, p. 322.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 333 and note 2.

is for the good of the state," went several times to the rue de Seine. At the time of Louis XIII's coronation at Rheims, she charged her and the Prince of Condé to present the young King for confirmation.[1] She chose her as godmother of her second son, Gaston, who had been baptized privately.

Margaret had no desire to be anything but agreeable. Marie de' Medici had given up the foreign policy of Henry IV and had arranged a marriage between Louis XIII and the eldest daughter of the King of Spain. To celebrate this happy alliance she chose the *mardi-gras* of 1611. The *fêtes* she gave in the Place Royale at the time of the betrothal were famous for their magnificence and were so like those of Fontainebleau and Bayonne that one is inclined to think that Margaret had helped to organize them.

Her talents were certainly in demand on the occasion of another marriage. The Duke of Pastraña came to ask the hand of Elizabeth of France, Marie de' Medici's eldest daughter, for Don Philip, the heir to the throne of Spain. Margaret gave a reception and a ball in honour of this envoy extraordinary. She had the great hall of her palace built round with seats in the form of an amphitheatre, where the King, the Queen, the princesses, the Duke of Pastraña, and the ladies and gentlemen could be seated according to their rank. She received them, "clad in a robe of silver cloth with flowing open sleeves, all sprinkled with roses of diamonds, as was the front of her dress." There was dancing to the strains of many violins; there were performed the *gavotte*, the *courante* and the *canaries*. Afterward a supper was served, "in which the setting, the dainties, and the magnificence were thought by all to be truly royal."[2]

But she rendered even greater services to the Queen Regent

[1] *Mercure François*, vol. xi, p. 21. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. ii, f. 572-574 (1613).

and the young King. Marie de' Medici, a foreigner without following or experience, had tried to hold the nobles whom the iron hand of Henry IV had subdued by giving them benefits and privileges. Generous as she was, they grew more exacting in their demands. And they bore a grudge against her for her favouritism to two of her compatriots. The upshot of it was that Condé, Mayenne, Bouillon, Nevers, and Longueville left the Court in February, 1614, and established themselves in the stronghold of Mézières. Vendôme escaped to his governorship of Brittany. Condé, the leader of the opposition, demanded a meeting of the Estates-General and a postponement of the Spanish marriages. The Chancellor, Sillery, persuaded Marie de' Medici to sign a treaty with the rebels at Sainte-Menehould, on humiliating terms.

Fortunately, Vendôme persisted in the revolt. Upon the advice of Villeroy, the Regent decided to give the kingdom a sight of the King, and to go in person to win over the provinces of the west. The appearance of Louis XIII caused great enthusiasm. Even the Protestants showed him every respect; La Rochelle begged the honour of a visit, saying that he would never see a more loyal city. Vendôme finally went to his brother at Nantes, and swore allegiance.

It was to influence the others to follow his example that Margaret appeared in the affair. She wrote to one of the leaders, whose name she does not mention, to dissuade him from all future opposition to the Crown and the Regency. This man was without doubt the Duke of Nevers, son of that warm-hearted Duchess with the periwinkle-blue eyes, Margaret's confidante in her long-ago love affairs with La Molle. To whom else could she have spoken of "the intimacy which everyone knows she had enjoyed with his mother"?[1] The

[1] *Mercure François*, vol. iii. Paris, 1617, pp. 485-488.

princes were counting on the end of the Regency and remained cold and distant. Margaret pointed out to the Duke as a friend that the King would carry on his mother's policies. She spoke as one well informed. Louis XIII attained his majority in October, 1614, and announced his intention of abiding by his mother's decisions and of making her second only to himself in Council. Margaret urged the Duke to change his tactics, and in the end he returned to take up his place at Court.

Once again she played the rôle of mediator during the session of the Estates-General in the winter of 1614-15. The nobles and the clergy were demanding a tax which would hit the Third Estate very heavily, and there was danger that trouble would arise. Margaret intervened by writing a strong letter to the Cardinal de Sourdis, and a compromise was finally reached that satisfied all parties.

With these two efforts of conciliation she brought her life to a noble close. Without regrets and without bitterness, she devoted herself to strengthening the new dynasty. The Court, forgetful of her services, was very wrong in sneering at the old-fashioned ways of this true daughter of France. Certainly she did not want to realize that she had grown old; she continued to see herself as in the days when even the cold Montaigne had been moved by her beauty. "She became grossly fat," says Tallemant des Réaux, yet she loved to expose her throat. Her figure was gone, yet she wore iron plates to make her hips look larger. With her voluminous skirts and huge sleeves, "there were many doors through which she could not pass." Her everlasting blond wig, which once covered fine dark hair, now concealed a bald head. She continued to dress in the styles of the period when she was the

arbiter of all fashion and elegance. The figure she cut was a sad reminder of a past that had long ago slipped far away.

Her health was failing, too. Scipion Du Pleix speaks of her nervousness and hysteria, brought on by all she had suffered in the stormy period of her life.

Of her life of passion, continued far into her advancing years, this much may be said. She reconciled her weaknesses perfectly naturally with sincere habits of devotion, having a heart so large that she could find place for both God and men. Every day of her life she heard Mass three times. In Paris she visited the hospitals and almshouses; she distributed Holy Bread on the appointed days; she was very charitable. L'Estoile tells how beggars congregated near her palace as a sort of refuge. She gave her protection to some Irish refugees, driven from their country by English intolerance, who were starving in Paris. She even became godmother to a child who had been born on the steps of a church, and she called in as godfather the Duke of Montmorency, who was passing by.

Her good works were not sops offered to redeem her sins. It is not at all sure that she considered love a sin. She was generous with her money as with her person. In her taste for luxury, in her eagerness for magnificence, in her complete extravagance, she was a true child of her race. She spent without counting, opened her hand to all appeals, and when she had no money, she borrowed. She had no idea of managing funds; they melted away in her household, and the succession of her favourites cost dear.

She never could bear to renounce any of the joys of life. Her health, which had never been superlatively good, grew worse after her return from Auvergne. She caught cold very easily. In September, 1613, she was so ill that she was considered lost. Her last fancy, Villars, the singer, made a vow

that if his mistress recovered he would perform a pilgrimage to Notre-Dame de Victoire near Senlis. Margaret did recover. Villars set out on foot at four o'clock of an October morning, and the Queen followed two hours later in her litter. This mixture of earthly love and devotion amused the cynical Malherbe; it must have scandalized the good priests who visited in the rue de Seine. But the old reverence for royal birth closed their lips.

It was a layman, Antoine Le Clerc, Margaret's master of requests, who seems to have prepared her conversion. He was one of the ardent souls whom the passions of the religious wars had led to works of active piety. He was deeply absorbed in matters of the soul, lost in contemplation of God. He was said to speak on earthly greatness with such violence that "there rushed into the spirits of his hearers an unbelievable scorn."

As the Queen's strength declined, the exhortations of Le Clerc became more urgent, and they succeeded in inspiring this passionate soul to consent to the sacrifices demanded by piety. Some time after the opening of the Estates-General she took to her bed. Contrary to all expectations, her health improved. "Just as there was no hope for her," wrote Malherbe, "she was held today to be out of danger." [1] The Queen Mother planned to distract her in her convalescence by a ballet. But this was to be another mistake. On the 27th of May, 1615, she was so ill that her confessor bade her think of her salvation. She thanked him and rewarded him by a present of her silver. At eleven o'clock she was dead.

Her body was laid in state. Common people and the nobility hastened to look upon her. "I shall take her as seen," wrote Malherbe, ungraciously, "for there is a crowd as great

[1] *Œuvres de Malherbe*, vol. iii, pp. 492-493.

as at any ballet." She was indeed popular—with that kind of popularity made up of sympathy for the Valois family, stirred by the prestige of her birth, the romance and sorrow of her life, and touched by her charity and generosity. She was loved for the friendliness of her welcome, for her goodness, for her warm heart. The people of Paris either knew nothing of or cared nothing for her slips of conduct. Her attitude during the troubles of the Regency had been really fine. She had done no quarrelling, she had spun no web of intrigue; with all her power she had upheld the woman who reigned in her place, and the young King who was not of her blood. She fully justified the statement she had made at Usson: "I have no ambition and I have no need for it, being who and what I am."

There were some people in the crowd who were not entirely disinterested, however. "This morning," Malherbe reports again, "the chamber of the Queen was so full of creditors that one could not turn around."[1] Marie de' Medici tried to reassure them. She expressed a willingness to pay all the just debts of the late Queen, adding, "If I did it not, I should be frightened lest she come torment me." Superstitious like any Italian woman, she was only half in jest.

Payment of these debts was one of the last concerns of the dying woman. By her will,[2] drawn up on the 25th of March, 1615, she left all her possessions to the King and the Queen Mother, but she laid a charge that her legatees should pay her debts and remit the pensions of her ladies and gentlemen and officials "for two quarters." She also begged them to remember certain vows and small bequests which she had not liked to mention to the notaries. Were it known, the list of minor

[1] *Œuvres de Malherbe*, vol. iii, pp. 492-493.
[2] Félibien, *Histoire de Paris*, vol. iv, p. 49.

legatees might cast some light on various points in her love history; if such curiosity is unbecoming, it is at least in the interest of truth.

The King, the Queen Mother, and the royal children went into mourning. The body lay in the church Margaret had built as a thank offering, and there it remained for more than a year. After a voyage to Guyenne and the west to conclude the Spanish marriages and to put down a new revolt, Marie de' Medici came back to Paris. The Treasury was so depleted by the expenses of the journey, the preparation for war, and the price paid for the peace, that the body was borne by night to Saint-Denis, with two archers as sole escort. Héroard says that the monks made a scene, suspecting a trick on account of the small number of attendants, but finally received her.[1]

Catherine de' Medici had built a funeral chapel adjoining the north transept, intended for her husband, her children, and herself.[2] Although it was not finished, Margaret of Valois was laid to rest there.

It is impossible to tell what has become of her coffin and remains. The good historians of the Abbey of Saint-Denis do not quote her name on the list of persons whose tombs exist or have existed there. The Chapel of the Valois was destroyed in 1719, and the monument to Henry II and Catherine de' Medici was set up within the church, where it now stands. But of their daughter's bones none can tell. They may have been scattered to the winds by the carelessness of the old régime, by the action of time, or by the fury of the Revolution.

[1] Héroard, vol. ii, p. 200.

[2] Paul Vitry and Gaston Brière, *L'Eglise Abbatiale de Saint-Denys et ses tombeaux*, Paris, 1908, pp. 18-19.

CONCLUSION

MARGARET OF VALOIS—her name has come to mean a "lady of many loves." Don Juan kept a catalogue of his conquests; her historians have obligingly drawn up a list of her twenty-two lovers.

No one would try to protest that she was a virtuous woman in the strict sense of the word; from the time of her marriage until a little while before her death she was never without a lover. In love, as in life, she did things on a grand scale. Yet much of the slander published about her after her death was false. Scipion Du Pleix attributes to her real disgrace and infamy, for which there is no definite authority. He asserts that her relations with the Duke of Anjou were immoral, that she had two illegitimate children; in both cases, common sense and subsidiary evidence refute the charges.

Pierre Matthieu, or his son Jean-Baptiste, writes on this subject: "Her beauty . . . made all hearts waste away. That sun warmed them, lightened and scorched all that came within its rays, so that no warmth or heat was left for itself. Although it was believed that her beauty conspired against her honour, she often said that the beginning of love is fair, but the end worth nothing."

Was she an intellectual, sure of herself, trying her power over men, was she a dreamer in search of refined ecstasy, was she simply a sensualist? How can one know? Admired, adored for her physical beauty and the distinction of her mind, renowned for her elegance and perfection of taste, it is barely possible that she made a game of arousing passion. Her ideal of pure love must not be entirely forgotten, but on the other

hand, her Platonic aspiration often failed her. There is really no doubt that *la reine Margot* experienced and delighted in the joys of love. She reconciled the spirituality of her dreams with the materialism of her pleasures. She brought God and men on a common plane of mystic adoration. She lived without remorse and without shame, but not without sorrow and danger.

Yet in love and pleasure, in the exaltation of the body or in rapture of the spirit, she learnt that all is vanity. It was not her only disillusion. There is no doubt that she had had the hope of playing a part in politics. So many women, her own mother included, had done great things in the world of the sixteenth century, that she too could aspire to power and influence. But she did not realize that these women had voluntarily renounced their femininity. The Queen of England never married. Never was a lover credited to Catherine de' Medici. Like the unfortunate Mary Stuart, whose passions cost her her power and liberty, Margaret could not make the necessary sacrifices. She needed affection, and her heart was always involved with her ambition.

Her true claim to glory was neither her beauty nor the part she played in politics, but one she never dreamed of—her talent as a writer. Her *Mémoires,* her letters, which Brantôme compares to the Epistles of Cicero, and the anonymous works upon which her mind and spirit have left their imprint—by these is she admitted to the Pantheon of History. Margaret has a master touch in her prose, which the French Academy sets among the models of the art of writing, on account of the purity, grace, and dignity of its style. It is her real contribution to France and to posterity.

In all her writing, she never forgets that she is a woman and a queen; never does a vulgar word or phrase escape her.

CONCLUSION

This literature of conscious good taste may lose something in freshness and vitality; it gains in dignity, elegance, and distinction. It may be taken as a symbol of the society that emerged from the wars of religion—a society punctilious in order and bearing, aristocratic and monarchical, idealistic in form and inspiration. The Queen of Navarre is an example of this evolution; her writing is a precursor of the new style and the new age; at the same time it is one of its most polished specimens.

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